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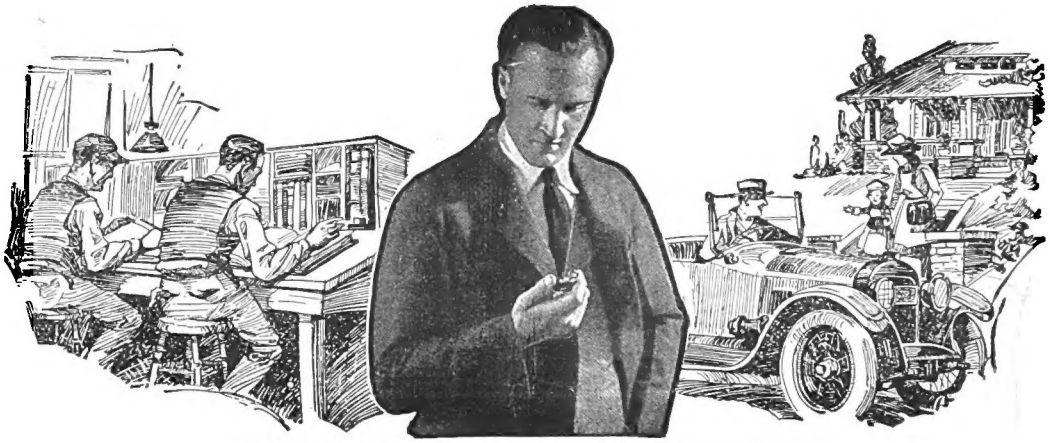

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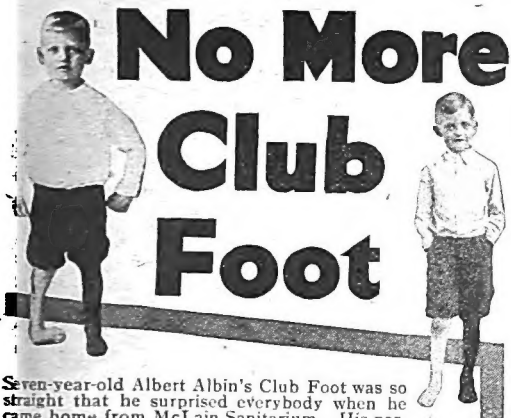

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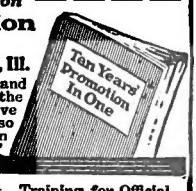

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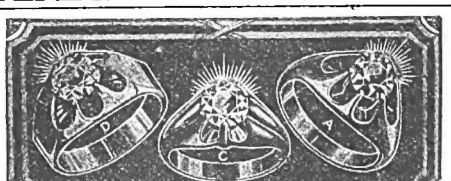

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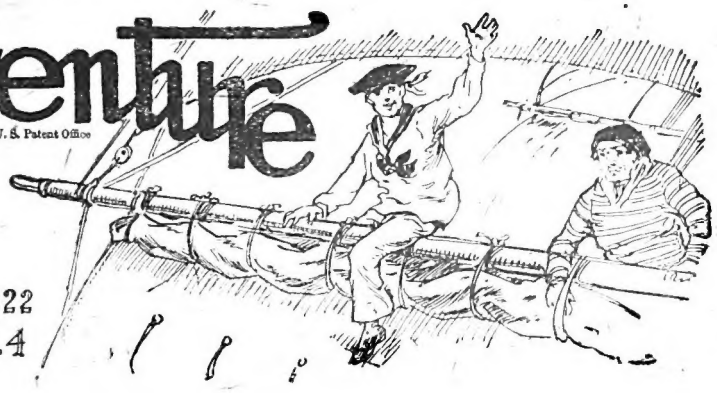

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure*, published three times a month at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1921. State of New York, County of New York, *ss.* Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of the *Adventure* and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher: THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York City. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, 223 Spring Street, New York City. 2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.) *Owner:* THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. *Stockholders:* FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J. Stockholder of FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY: THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Stockholders of BUTTERICK COMPANY: GEORGE B. BLACK, 812 Lincoln Avenue, Menlota, Illinois. JOHN M. DONINGTON, 37 Wall Street, New York City. W. H. GELSHENEN, 100 William Street, New York City. GUDE, WINMILL & Co., 20 Broad Street, New York City. S. R. LATSHAW, Butterick Building, New York City. H. G. MILLARD, 132 East 19th Street, New York City. LAURA J. O'LAUGHLIN, 156 Ridge Street, Glens Falls, N. Y. MRS. ARETHUSA POND, San Remo Hotel, New York City. ERMAN J. RIDGWAY, 280 Broadway, New York City. R. A. VAN WYCK, 149 Broadway, New York City. G. W. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City. BEN F. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City. H. N. WHITNEY & SONS, 15 Broad Street, New York City. BELLE H. M. HOOPER, JANE S. MORSE, EVERETT MASTEN, HORACE P. POOR, Trustees, Estate of HARRY F. MORSE, deceased, care of Garfield National Bank, New York City. 3. *That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)* None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is (This information is required from daily publications only.) J. F. BIRMINGHAM, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1921. CECIL L. WAHL, Notary Public, Kings County No. 99, Kings County Register No. 2087, New York County Clerk No. 236, Register No. 2192. (*My commission expires March* 30, 1922.) (SEAL.) Form 3526.—Ed. 1916.

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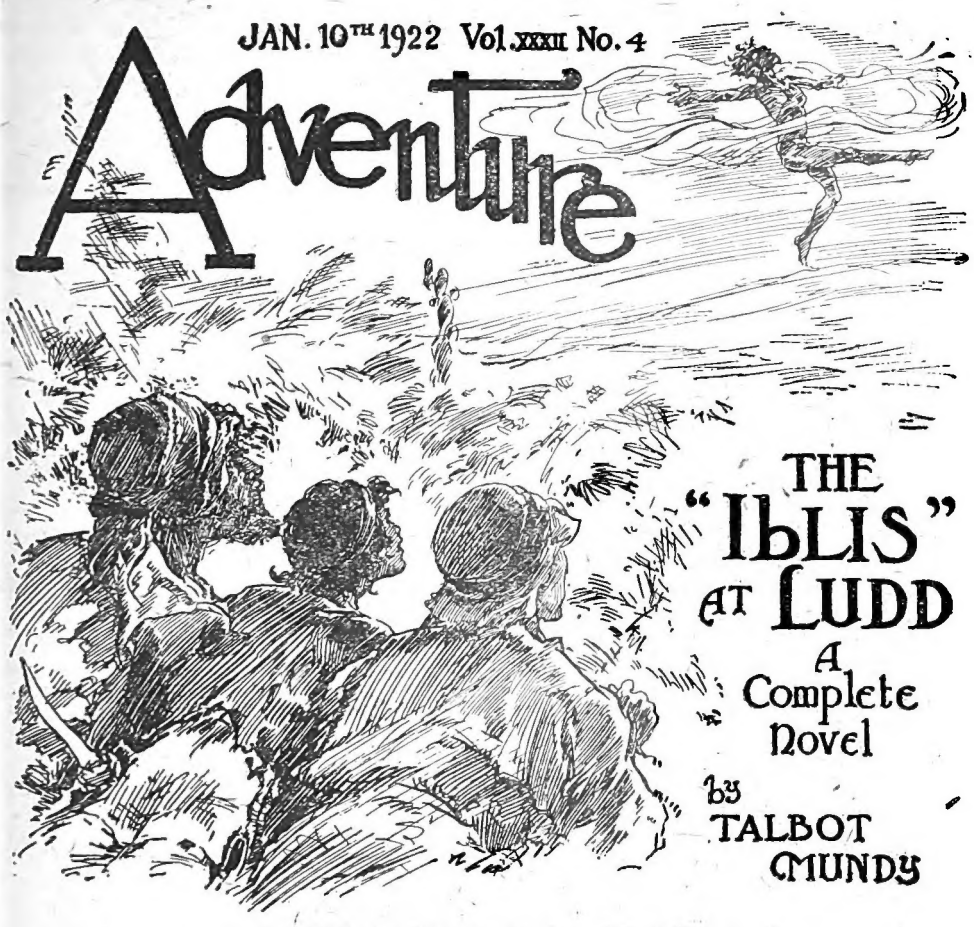

THE "IBLIS" AT LUDD

A Complete Novel

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "Blighty," "Under the Dome of the Rock," etc.

CHAPTER I

"Lead on, Jimgrim sahib. *I have seen the day when stronger boars than that one bit the dust!"*

AS A GENERAL rule when Major Jim Grim strode into the administrator's office in the former German hospice, now British headquarters in Jerusalem, it was to be greeted with that kind of confident familiarity that, from his official superior, warms the fiber of a man's being. Jim's standing in the administrator's favor was the cause of a good deal of jealousy; more than one British officer resented the frequent private consultations between Sir Henry Kettle and the American, although they could not prevent them.

They might have felt less jealous if they had known of the wholesale disregard of personal feelings (Jim's especially) whenever the administrator considered him at fault.

Jim walked into the administrator's private office three mornings after having run to ground the Dome of the Rock conspirators, rather expecting the usual smile and exchange of unusual jokes before broaching the day's business. But Sir Henry Kettle opened on him without formality, with blazing eyes and a voice like flint.

"Look here, Grim, what the —— do you mean by this? I've received complaint of insolence and insubordination, made against you by Brigadier-General Jenkins. It came in the morning mail from Ludd. Were you insolent to him?"

"Maybe."

"Insubordinate?"

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"That 'ud be a matter of opinion, sir."

"Do you realize that if he presses these charges there'll be a court martial, and you'll be broke?"

"I didn't tell him what I thought of him because he was acting like a gentleman," Jim answered.

"That isn't the point. Jenkins may be a lot of things without that excusing you in the least. What I demand to know is, how dare you risk my having to court martial you and lose your services?"

There was not any answer Jim could make to that, so he said nothing.

"Are you under the impression that because an exception was made in your case, and you were recognized as an American citizen when given a commission in the British Army, that therefore you're at liberty to ignore all precedent and be insolent to whom you please? If so, I'll disillusion you!"

Jim knew his man. He wanted none of that kind of disillusionment. He continued to hold his tongue, standing bolt upright in front of the administrator's desk.

"Apply your own standards if you like. How long would insolence from major to brigadier be tolerated in the United States Army?"

That was another of those questions that are best left alone, like dud shells and sleeping TNT.

"Jenkins writes that you gave him the lie direct. Is that true?"

"No. I asked him a question he couldn't answer without telling a lie, or else retracting what he'd said."

"He says you offered to fight him."

"Not quite. He was afraid to go to you with a lame story, and wanted me to help soak Catesby with all the blame for losing that TNT. I refused. I know Catesby—know him well. I told Jenkins that if it 'ud make him like himself any better he might put the gloves on with me any time he sees fit. It was unofficial—not in front of witnesses—and it stands. He took me up; said he'd give me the thrashing of my life. He also promised not to make a goat of Catesby."

"Well, he has charged Captain Catesby with neglect of duty in permitting those two tons of TNT to be stolen from a truck on a railway siding. Catesby is under arrest."

"May I say what I think about that, just between you and me?"

"Certainly not! But for your insolence to Jenkins I could have brought him to book over this business.

"Do you see the predicament you've put me in? This isn't the first time Jenkins has covered his own shortcomings by putting blame on a subordinate. I've been watching my chance to turn you loose on him. He gives it to me by accusing Catesby, and you spoil it! You're the one man Jenkins is afraid of; but how can I send you to investigate him now without upholding a breach of discipline?"

"I'll do anything to make amends that you would do, sir, if you stood in my shoes," said Jim.

"I can't imagine myself in your shoes," Kettle retorted. "I was never guilty of insubordination in my life."

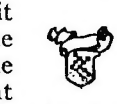
"Maybe you never had reason," Jim answered. "What I said to him was in private. There were no witnesses, but he promised not to make a goat of Catesby. It's his word against mine, and if he dares press that charge against me I shall call him a liar in open court, and take the consequences."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. You'll go to Ludd at once, clear Captain Catesby if you can, find the real culprit, and do your utmost to whitewash Jenkins in the process.

"I'm leaving for Ludd by motor in twenty minutes myself. I shall see Jenkins and arrange that he'll accept an apology, which you will make to him the moment you arrive. Do you understand me?"

"I understand I'm to apologize. Yes, I'll do that, since you wish it."

"Stay at Ludd until you've cleaned up," the administrator added deliberately. "There has been a lot of thieving down there that looks like organized conspiracy. Dig to the bottom of it. That's all."



OUTSIDE the room Jim lit a cigaret and chuckled to himself. If there was one man on earth whom he despised and hated it was Brigadier-General Jenkins.

Nor was he alone in that particular. He more than suspected that the administrator shared his feelings; and he knew for a fact that half the British Army in Palestine loathed the man for his blatant self-advertising.

So to be told to go to work to whitewash Jenkins appealed to his sense of humor, the

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more so as he divined that underneath the administrator's actual words there lay another meaning. Jim and Sir Henry Kettle understood each other pretty accurately as a rule. Discipline was to be upheld at all costs. Well and good; he would apologize. But, since half-measures formed no part of Jim's philosophy, he decided to carry out the administrator's instructions to the letter and to find some way of giving Jenkins such an elegant coat of white as should embarrass even that praise-hungry brigadier.

Fair play and Sir Henry Kettle were synonymous terms. Therefore there was more in this than met the eye. Therefore—"Forward, march!"

He walked down the echoing corridor chuckling to himself, and almost ran into Colonel Goodenough, a commander of Sikhs who cherished a good soldier as he did a horse.

"Morning, Grim. Got a K. C. B. or something? What's the good news? Share it!"

"I'm off to Ludd."

"Good Ludd deliver us! Fleas—sand—centipedes—raw recruits—sick horses—thieves—and the man's happy! Are there any more at home like you?"

"I need one of your men to go with me, sir."

"So that's the joke, is it? Well, it's on you. You can't have him. I'm short of men. There seem to be only two classes of people in universal demand in Jerusalem—Sikhs and jail-birds; jail-birds for the dirty work, and Sikhs to push perambulators. Every man in my regiment has two men's work to do. I won't spare one of them."

"Lend me Narayan Singh, sir."

"Why, —— it, he's my best man!"

"Sure. That's why I want him."

"He's priceless. If you want my private opinion he could run the regiment better than I can. Why, I use that man to teach my officers their business."

"Reward him then," Jim answered. "Give him a job after his own heart. Send him with me."

"For how long?"

"Indefinite. I'm to smell out the thieves at Ludd."

"Well—it's true—that would be a picnic for Narayan Singh. He deserves a treat. But if you get him killed or seriously injured I'll murder you. Why, I spent all one night in No Man's Land at Gaza hunting for that man rather than lose him; I wouldn't have done as much for my grandmother."

"That how you got the V. C.?"

"—— it, yes. And Narayan Singh got nothing, although I recommended him until I was sick of writing letters. He'd done ten times what I did. If you borrow him I want him back all in one piece marked 'perishable'.

"Watch that he doesn't get malaria down there at Ludd. Don't overwork him. See that he gets regular meals. I tell you, that man's precious!"

"How soon can I have him?"

"I'm on my way to the lines now. Come in my car and get him."

THEY went down the Mount of Olives at Goodenough's usual speed, which was not based on such considerations as the view, or the nerves either, of Jerusalem, and brought up presently in a cloud of dust in front of a marquee behind a barbed-wire fence on the outskirts of the city. Two minutes later Narayan Singh, lean, enormous, bearded, looked straight into his colonel's eyes across the table.

"You're to go with this officer, Narayan Singh."

"*Atcha, sahib.*"

"You're to bring him back from Ludd alive."

"*Atcha, sahib.*"

"Otherwise do whatever he tells you to."

"*Atcha,* colonel *sahib.*"

"March with your kit to the station and meet Major Grim there in time for the morning-train. Dismiss."

The Sikh saluted and fell away, but his brown eyes met Jim's with a flare of gratitude. It was almost ferocious, like the expression of a hound unchained for sport. Jim nodded to him, but neither said a word.

Jim borrowed the colonel's car and drove to the junior staff officers' mess, where he went upstairs in a hurry. Finding nobody in his own room, he went on up to the attic and stooped over an enormous packing-case. Groping in it, he pulled out a black foot, followed by a small boy, whose woolly hair suggested the Sudan and a mother sold into Arab slavery. His features were certainly Arabic.

"You lucky, lucky little devil! Twelve hours' sleep out of twenty-four—just think of it! Wake up now and pack your kit; roll

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it all into your blanket and come with me to the station."

"What is it, Jimgrim? Are we transferred?"

"You've got to learn to ask no questions when you get your marching-orders."

"All right, Jimgrim."

"Narayan Singh will inspect that kit when you get to the station. Better be careful."

He left the boy sleepily arranging on a blanket all the odds and ends that had appealed to his eight-year-old imagination since Jim discovered him starving one Winter night in the drafty archway of the Jaffa Gate. They were pretty much the same things that a small boy born in America would choose—a tin can, a broken knife, a mouth-organ, a picture out of a magazine, an incomplete pack of playing-cards, some half-smoked cigarets and a broken mouse-trap—all frightfully important.

Jim packed into his own kit three complete changes of native costume, and was ready first.

Narayan Singh was the only one of Jim's friends who did not object to Suliman; the only one who took it for granted that the profit of fostering a small boy might outweigh the trouble, and who was thoroughly willing to share the trouble and forego all profit.

The Sikh took charge of Suliman at the station, made him unroll his kit on the platform, rebuked him because the broken knife-blade was not clean, solemnly suggested proper ways of polishing the outside of a tin box, and invented on the spot the only moral and properly complicated way of packing such possessions in a blanket.

In the flat-wheeled train that bumped and pounded through the gorge leading down from Jerusalem Narayan Singh came forward from the third-class end of the train to find Jim.

"The *butcha* will make a man, *sahib*," he announced.

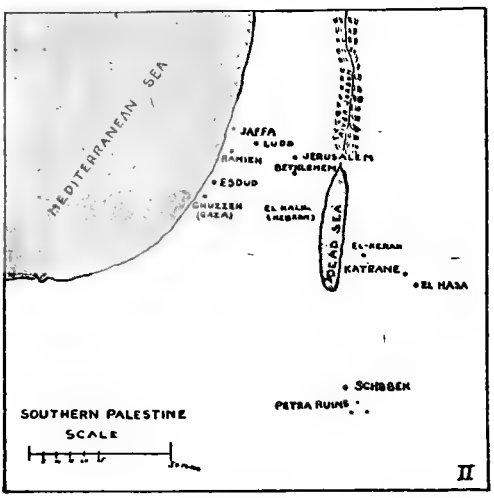
"Why, what's his latest?"

"I asked him what he supposes our *sahib* intends to do with him at Ludd.

" 'Though I could hide in your beard, Narayan Singh,' said he, 'and you have killed your man a dozen times, yet I shall be a soldier before you are. For though you do not know enough not to ask questions when you have had marching orders, nevertheless I know enough not to answer you.' How is that, *sahib*, from a *butcha* hardly higher than my knee?"

"He learns. But see he doesn't smoke too much, and when he swears beat him."

Brigadier-General Jenkins was on the station-platform at Ludd, cutting quite a figure, what with his upstanding bulk and the number of obedient subalterns grouped all about him. The set stage was obvious at



once. The administrator's motor had evidently come faster than the train. Jenkins had been ordered to accept an apology, and for lack of any better means of showing spite had arranged to make it as public as possible.

Jim, with Narayan Singh at his heels carrying all the baggage, walked straight up to him and saluted.

"Well, Major Grim?"

"I apologize."

Jenkins turned a little to one side in order better to include the crowd.

"What for?"

"For presuming to speak to you as a man and my equal the other day instead of as a person of higher rank. I withdraw all I said, including the imputation. Do you accept?"

Jenkins nodded. Having his orders from higher up, it was all he could do. The subalterns smirked as he turned on his heel, and two or three of them winked at Jim. Narayan Singh was the only one who spoke, growling into Jim's ear as he once more gathered up the baggage:

"Lead on, Jimgrim *sahib*. I have seen the day when stronger boars than that one bit the dust!"

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CHAPTER II

"That was only an American devil. This is a Palestine one. They are much worse."

THERE is one good thing, at any rate, about being commissioned under army regulations. It is true that you have to concede gentility to seniors sometimes ignorant of the crudest meaning of the word; but on the other hand you yourself remain a presumptive gentleman until the contrary is proven. You are liable to arrest at the whim of arrogance; but you don't have to find bail, or sit in a cell until your case comes up for hearing.

So Jim found Catesby taking it easy in a deck-chair in his tent—a pretty good tent, nicely hung with souvenirs of the East from Cairo to Bokhara, with soda-water siphons in a basket full of wet grass slung from the ridge-pole in the sun to keep them cool, and plenty to read.

"Hullo, Uncle Sam. What are you doing here? Come in. Make yourself at home. I heard you were under arrest in Jeroosh."

"No. I've apologized."

"Lucky devil. Wish an apology might fumigate my official rep. Afraid I'm damned. How on earth did you manage it? Jinks has been bragging all over the shop that he'd as good as broke you. Mother of me! D'you mean to say you're at liberty and camping on Jinks' trail? Oh—what was that word of Roosevelt's?—oh, bully! Jimgrim, if you get Jenkins' number I'll pledge myself to black your boots from now to doomsday."

"My orders are to whitewash him."

"Oh, ——! That means good-by me. Home for me on a troopship to what used to be Merrie England—broke."

"Incidentally I've orders to clear you."

"Can't be done, old man; not if the impeccable Jinks is to save his face. They tell me *sub rosa* that he's cooking up half a dozen extra charges to make sure of breaking me."

"Business is business," Jim chuckled. "All this firm asks is orders. Goods delivered while you wait."

"But listen; we haven't an earthly. Two tons of TNT came in a truck consigned by mistake to this brigade. The R. T. O. (railway man) shot it into a siding and notified Jinks, who probably lost the advice or lit his pipe with it.

"Three days later the Air Force, who were expecting the stuff, began to make inquiries—twisted the tail of the R. T. O. to help his memory—went to the siding—found the truck—seals broken—no TNT. Went for Jinks promptly. Jinks blustered as usual—denied all knowledge of the consignment—was shown a copy of the R. T. O.'s memorandum—remembered a few stale grudges against me, and swore he had given me orders to go and take charge of the stuff the moment it came. I was sent for, and it was the first I'd heard of it.

"In less than two minutes he had me under arrest to await court martial for culpable negligence and disobedience to orders. I shall plead not guilty, of course. He'll swear he gave me orders. I'll deny it. His word against mine. *Maalesh*—feenish!—as the Arabs say."

"What other charges can he bring against you?"

"Anything he pleases. What's the odds? There's so much thieving going on in this camp—no thieves caught or stuff recovered—that any sort of charge against any one gets believed. How can you possibly checkmate a brigadier like Jenkins in the circumstances?"

"Did you ever kill a dog?" asked Jim.

"Yes."

"How?"

"Bullet. Poison. Why?"

"They say there are more ways of killing them than by choking them to death with butter; but suppose we try butter just this once."

"Jinks'll eat all the butter there is and yell for more."

"Let's try him. Tell me what you know, or guess, or think, about that TNT. You know I recovered the stuff in Jerusalem? There was a Moslem plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock and blame it on the Zionists. Who's the worst fanatic in these parts?"

"All the Hebron men are fanatics; you know that. They're the principal thieves. They hide all over the place, and grease themselves at night, and slip past the sentries. Once in a while one gets skewered with a bayonet or shot, but the loot outweighs the risk, and for one that gets napooed twenty get away with it."

"Kettle told me it looked like organized conspiracy."

"I don't believe it. It's just half-brother Ishmael with his hand against every man and every man's hand against him."

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"You haven't heard of any sheik or priest or trader hereabouts who's getting rich and uppish?"

"No. It's simply a case of flies around a jam-pot."

"See you later," said Jim, grinning to hide from Catesby his own appreciation of the fact that the brigadier held all trump cards.

He continued to wear the grin by way of self-encouragement.

IN EVERY circumstance, condition, situation and characteristic has its advantage, only so few know how to look for them. Still, a more than normally alert man can stumble on advantage now and then; and if he has trained himself he can sometimes make the most of what turns up. Individuals seem to have special values in the eternal scheme. The especial merit of Suliman was that, being a small boy, he hero-worshiped and at the same time believed implicitly in bogies.

The merit of a Sikh is different. He, too, worships heroes, but from another point of view; and the more he happens to believe in the unseen, the more suspicious he is of the unexplainable that can be seen and touched and heard. But this both Sikhs and small boys have in common, that they love the lines and the gossip of the lines.

Narayan Singh, given no orders to the contrary, could no more have kept away from the tents where other Sikhs were idling the time away than Suliman could have done, orders to the contrary or not.

Jim went to the row of tents reserved for visiting officers, discovered his bed already made and kit unpacked, but nothing of Narayan Singh or Suliman. There was a Sikh mounting guard at either end of the short line, but they knew no more than that Narayan Singh had come and gone again, taking the *butcha* with him. So he set off to explore the camp on his own account.

Ludd, which was Lystra when they wrote the Bible, is one of those places that fills the military mind with wonder at civilian complacency, and stirs civilians to murmur at the thoughtlessness of army men. The town itself is practically undefendable, yet there has always been a town there, in a land where raid and robbery are the normal thing; and whenever Jew, Egyptian, Philistine, Syrian, Babylonian, Roman, Mongol, crusader and Turk in turn have razed the place, its inhabitants have always built it up again very much as ants rebuild a ruined hill.

It sits on a sandy plain at the foot of the Judean Hills, from which plunderers can swoop down on it at their discretion. There is practically no water except in the rainy season, when there is a lot too much. There are snakes, mosquitoes, centipedes, bed-bugs, fleas and flies. And the largest army in the Near East was camped there, drawing its drinking-water all the way from Egypt through an iron pipe made in the U. S. A.

The secret of that is that, although the surrounding hills are perfectly contrived by nature to be robbers' fastnesses, and the plains below were manifestly meant for robbers' meat, you can't supply and maneuver an army readily among the hills, whereas Ludd is not only a railway junction but is an excellent pushing-off place in every direction, with ample room for store-sheds, aeroplanes, cavalry lines and what not. So the army, depending on mobility for its security, tolerated the climate and conditions, while the thieves descended from places in the hills, like Hebron, and grew fat.

Jim strolled about the camp enjoying himself more or less, as any man must who loves with devouring interest whatever lives. In an armed camp the very gun-mules learn a new intelligence; and the dogs, without which in dozens no British army—or American for that matter—could maintain its social self-respect, come nearer to being impudently human than in any other circumstances.

There is tidiness, even among barbed-wire and prickly-pear entanglements, and a sense of getting the very utmost out of life (which is true humor as well as sound economy) that may become monotonous to those in camp, but thrill the new arrival. And there are all the minor innovations made by individual commanding officers for making something out of nothing for the men's sake, to be admired, or criticized, if you are half-observant. Nothing much escaped Jim's eye or missed its lodgment in his memory. But there was nothing that looked like a cord for hanging Jenkins.

At the end of an hour of all-observant sauntering he returned to the station to interview the R. T. O., a red-necked, overworked, opinionative despot (like the rest of them; it seems you can't run a military

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railway and be tolerant of other people's feelings). Some one in the early days of war had dug this man out from a freight-junction in a London suburb, put him in uniform, and he had done the rest. He did not mind who knew it.

"Ho! So you're another that wants to know about that TNT? I told all I knew the minute they asked me. Facts at my fingers' ends. Made my report in writing. Nothing more to say!"

But there are ways of getting under the thick skin even of an R. T. O.

"How much truth is there in the story that you get commissions from the thieves who loot the railway?"

"What, me? Who says that? ——'s bells! This gang 'ud accuse their wet-nurses of selling milk! Anything missing? Blame the R. T. O.! Horse break away—sepoy get a dose of colic—general lose his shaving-brush? Require explanations in triplicate from the R. T. O.! Train two minutes late? Arrest the R. T. O. for mutiny! That's the life I lead.

"Listen. That TNT arrived in a truck. None o' my business. I ain't the hen that laid the stuff. I wrote out an advice on the proper form and sent it up to Jenkins, ordered the truck into number nineteen siding, and says to myself, 'There, that's the end of that, —— —— it!' and as far as I'm concerned that *is* the end of it. I'm busy. But if there's a man in Palestine from general downwards who wants to swap me two piasters against all the commissions I get from thieves or any one, walk him up to my office and we'll make the trade. *Good* morning!"

There was nothing to be unearthed there. The man was obviously as honest as self-satisfied. Jim strolled back to the camp and through the mule-transport lines, where he found Narayan Singh squatting on the sand in deep converse with a dozen grooms. Six or seven tents away Suliman was smoking a cigaret and gambling with three Arab urchins of about his own age.

He caught Narayan Singh's eye and nodded, passing on without disturbing the group to pounce on Suliman, turn him upside down and shake him until the unearned increment of small coins fell into the sand to be fought for by the other three.

"But not all that money was won from them!" Suliman objected.

"Good. Teach you not to gamble."

SULIMAN had to run to keep up and lost breath in the process, for the sand made heavy going. But he talked all the way, remonstrating at first about the loss of all that wit-won money, and, when remonstrance failed to produce the least effect, forgetting it in an intermittent flow of gossip. That being exactly what Jim wanted, there began to be abrupt replies that brought forth more.

"And, Jimgrim, this Ludd must be an evil place, although I like the mules and horses and dogs and men and everything."

"Well, what's the matter with it, then?"

"There is an *iblis*."

"A devil, is there? What does the devil do?"

"He is captain of the thieves. He dances at night in the hills, and the thieves bring him what they steal. He is *abras*."

"A leper is he? Have to start the P. M. O. on his trail."

"No. They say the chief doctor is afraid of him."

"Why?"

"Because besides being *abras* he is *mukaddas*."

"Holy, eh?"

"He is a *derwish* (dervish). They say he bewitches men by dancing, and after that the sentries can't see to shoot them or kill them with bayonets. I am afraid of the *iblis* Jimgrim. You will have to let me sleep inside your tent, because it is too dangerous outside under the sky."

"Tell me some more about the *iblis*. What is his name?"

"They say he has no name."

"Where does he live?"

"Nowhere—that is, everywhere! He comes and goes—first men see him in one place, then in another. They say he wears no clothes except a turban, and has beastly great marks of leprosy all over him. They say that if a soldier sees him, he can never shoot straight again, and when a man touches him, that man dies within the day. Oh, Jimgrim, suppose he should come in the night!"

Jim sat down on the "deck-chair, officer's, one" provided by a thoughtful War Office, and grinned.

"You've given me the right idea, youngster. Just for gambling you shall investigate this *iblis*."

"Allah forbid! I would not even go with you to look at him!"

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"All right. Then you shall wear girl's clothes for a year."

"*Aibl Ana bkul la!* (Shame! I say no!) Rather I will promise never to gamble again."

"You've promised before. You have gambled again. Now you've got to choose —forward like a man to find the *iblis*, or a girl's clothes for twelve months."

"I could run away to some village, Jimgrim. You would never find me."

"Suit yourself."

"When you were my age, Jimgrim, would you have gone to look for an *iblis*?"

"Sure."

"*Kizzab mutkarbik!* (You are a big liar!)"

"I hunted one before I was your age and found it was made of a pumpkin, a beanpole and a sheet."

"That was only an American devil. This is a Palestine one. They are much worse."

"Nothing's bad unless you're afraid of it," said Jim.

"Not gambling? I am not afraid of that."

"But you're afraid of the consequences— girls' clothes for a year."

Suliman stamped his foot and swore a steady stream of brimstone Arabic.

"Remember, you're only allowed ten swears a day!"

"I am a man! I will not wear a girl's clothes!"

"You'll find the *iblis* is a man when you lay hold of him."

"How can that be?"

"That's for you to find out."

At that moment Narayan Singh arrived silently, and saluted in the tent door.

"All this camp is by the ears about a *shaitan* (devil), *sahib*. He is said to make thieves invisible and to cast a spell on soldiers so that they can never shoot or stab straight."

"So I hear."

"They say he may not be hunted because Moslems think his person is sacred. They say, too, he is a leper; yet the medical officer may not arrest him for the same reason. Yet some say he is captain of the thieves. Shall we two take him in hand?"

"Sure. First thing."

"Does your honor want him alive? What if I put his sacredness to the test with a bullet?"

"Better investigate him first; there may be others. Be ready to come with me after dark."

"*Atcha, sahib.* Shall I place Suliman with friends who will look after him?"

"*La!* (No)" yelled Suliman. "I am a better man than any Sikh! I tell you I go too!"

CHAPTER III

"Now I won't hear a word from you against Jenkins —not one word!"

FROM a cursory inspection of that camp, such as any ordinary visitor might give it, the impression would have been gained that Brigadier-General Jenkins was supreme. That was because his brigade command chanced to lie nearest to the station, and his notion of the only way to achieve success in life was through advertisement.

Like many a commercial upstart of the type that he admired, advertisement had done a lot for him, and presently turned his head. To carry the metaphor further, he was becoming "overextended," pyramiding "futures" on the sudden profits of a chancy past. There were others than the administrator in Jerusalem aware of his ambition and the meager grounds for it.

For instance, there was Major-General Anthony, V. C., etc., in supreme command at Ludd, whom the public had hardly ever heard of because he cared to serve his country only, not himself. Jim found him in his shirt sleeves in the great marquee that overlooked the whole camp from rising ground at the rear.

"Glad to see you, Grim. Sit down. General Kettle was here this morning. He gave you some orders himself, I believe?"

"I've apologized already."

"Good. You're in my bad books, though. I was absent in Egypt when that TNT was lost. That gave Jenkins a chance to shift the blame, and he made the most of it. Now, thanks to your recovering the stuff and your block-headed idiocy in falling foul of him, Jenkins gets a new lease.

"Between you and me, Grim, he is one of those —— politicians. Friends in the War Office, you know, and all that kind of thing.

"There seems no way of getting rid of him. He reached his present eminence by being recommended for promotion by one C. O. after another, who couldn't endure him but didn't care to quarrel with his powerful friends.

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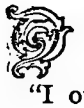
"His career is one long story of innocent fellows punished or broke to hide his shortcomings. Now, thanks to your infernal hot temper, he looks like breaking poor young Catesby, who's an efficient young officer.

"You're the logical man to have followed up that TNT business. You had it in hand and were successful beyond expectation. If you'd held your idiotic tongue, instead of telling Jenkins what you thought of him, I could have turned you loose down here, and what with his dislike of you and your brains I don't doubt he'd have tripped himself out of the Army in a week or so.

"But imagine what a whip hand it would give Jenkins over me if it transpired that I had proceeded against him on charges brought by a major who had been ordered to apologize to him for insubordination only a few days before! Do you see what your hotheadedness has done?

"Now I won't hear a word from you against Jenkins—not one word! You're to investigate the thieving that's going on down here, but I shall make a point of telling Jenkins myself this afternoon that you are here in his interest as much as any one's.



"NOW—is there anything I can do to simplify matters for you in any way?"

"I ought to have Catesby's assistance, sir."

"But he's under arrest."

"Catesby needs time and opportunity to hunt up evidence in his own defense, sir."

"He has made no such request to me. It would have to come from him, not you."

"I'm his next friend. If it comes to a court martial I shall defend him."

"I see. You propose to ignore my wigging and fall foul of the brigadier in that way, do you?"

"Absolutely no, sir! I'll carry out your orders to the letter."

"All right; I'll trust you. A note shall go to Jenkins asking him to release Captain Catesby's parole for fourteen days to enable him to look up evidence. Anything else?"

"You've heard of the *iblis*, of course?"

"The leper who dances in the moonlight? Yes. He's quite a problem. I was for having him hunted and bagged alive. The P.M.O. wants him interned as a danger to the health of the whole neighborhood, though where the —— he'd intern him I don't know. But some politician has been pulling strings. It seems the leper is a religious mystic held in high regard by the Moslems, and orders have come that he's not to be interfered with."

"They say in the lines that this *iblis* is the captain of the thieves."

"I know they do. I've known of things ten times more improbable."

"In that case," said Jim, "whatever politician pulled the strings is probably interested in the thieving."

"The order to let the leper alone came from Egypt."

"Why not override it on the ground of military expediency?"

"Because, the war's over, Grim, and the politicians are getting the upper hand. The way is being paved for civil government, and for every once that I override the political department I get ten defeats. I'm disposed now to let the politicians mix their own litter and lie in it."

Jim was a lot too wise to ask permission after that to tackle the *iblis*. It was sufficient that he had no orders not to tackle him. But he was more mystified than ever. Just as Sir Henry Kettle had done that morning, General Anthony seemed to be deliberately leaving a course unobstructed which, if Jim could find it, might lead to Jenkins' undoing. Why in thunder couldn't they tackle Jenkins outright, he wondered.

HE WENT straight to Jenkins' tent and sent his name in by the orderly, but was kept waiting five minutes while the brigadier whistled a tune; for there is nothing like cooling a junior's heels, according to some folk.

"Can you tell me anything, sir, that might lead to the discovery of who stole that TNT?" he asked when he was admitted.

"Hah! So our wonderful, astute American has come for assistance, eh? I thought you were such an expert intelligence officer that you never needed any one's advice? Glad to come to me after all, eh? What anticlimax! I dare say you wish now you'd made that apology a little more humble and less technical?"

There was no one else in the tent, although there might have been some eavesdropper listening behind it, for Jenkins knew no limits when his own advantage was in question. Jim took a grip on himself, and smiled.

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"I've been rebuked twice this morning for what I said to you the other day. Twice I've pledged myself to make amends, if I can, by getting all possible credit for you out of the clearing up of this thieving business."

"Oh!"

If there was one thing more than another on which Brigadier-General Jenkins prided himself it was his ability to read men and take advantage of their peculiarities. Next to that he considered his claim to success lay in swift appraisal of subsurface reasons—political judgment in other words.

Jim Grim he assessed as one of those slaves of integrity, who value their own word above all other considerations; a slave, moreover, who had no influential backing. He did not doubt that whatever Jim had promised to do he would do, whoever might be discommoded in the process. There were only two men who could have made Jim promise—Kettle and Anthony—and only some one higher up still who could have actuated them; therefore somebody attached to headquarters in Cairo must have been pulling more than usually effective strings.

There might even have come definite instructions from the Foreign Office in London that the way must be paved for Brigadier-General Jenkins' appointment to a civil post. The day of civil government was rapidly approaching. He himself had worked all the backstairs wires. There were more unlikely things.

Jenkins was no simpleton. He understood perfectly that both Kettle and Anthony detested and despised him; and, blinded by his own conceit, he supposed they would be willing to praise him with their tongues in their cheeks in order to get rid of him.

"Soho!" he remarked, and whistled a bar or two.

Jim, loathing him, skin, bone and stuffing, stood with a straight face, waiting while the brigadier turned his stalwart back to think.

"So we're to pull together, are we, eh? Well—I'm not vindictive. I'd half a mind to ruin your career—d'you know that? I won't stand insolence from any man. *Nemo me impune lacessit;* that's my motto. I've got teeth, and I like the world to know it. However, as you seem eager to reenforce a lame apology by doing the right thing, I'll let bygones be bygones and we'll forget the incident."

JIM'S memory was reputed to be a trifle more retentive than that, had Jenkins stopped to think, but the brigadier was full steam ahead already on the track of self-advancement with the terminus in view. The brakes weren't working.

"Sit down. Now this thieving that has been going on in the camp is a perfectly scandalous business. There's no excuse for it. Not counting that TNT, which was returned to store—thanks to some extent, I believe, to your efforts—the Army has lost a hundred and nine rifles in three months, to say nothing of countless rounds of ammunition—blankets—groceries—soap—underclothing—and stores of all kinds. Incompetence, of course. Best not to mention names.

"Between you and me, I've been waiting for the Army auditor to check things up and discover how much is missing. That's done now. They know in Cairo just how much remissness there has been.

"Now's the time, then, for somebody to get credit for changing the state of affairs. You're a man who's had rapid promotion; there's no need to tell you that the paving of the short cut consists of other men's mistakes. Very well. Somebody will have to pay; but what is that man's poison may turn out to be your meat and mine. D'you get my meaning?"

"Perfectly."

"Have a cigar. It's obvious to the meanest intelligence—or at least it ought to be obvious, you'd think—that these thieves have a headquarters. Any general with half an eye would recognize signs of the thieves being organized. That means they've got a leader—perhaps two or three men, but more likely one—directing all of them. Is that much clear?"

"Sounds obvious."

"It is. My notion of a good commanding officer is a man with his ear to the ground, who listens, and knows what the men are saying. Any man with only one ear, and that half full of wax, would know that it's common talk in this camp that the captain of the thieves is a notorious leper. Have you heard of him?"

"Yes."

"Have you heard any reasonable explanation as to why he's left at liberty? No, of course you haven't, for there is none. There's a reason given, of course, but it's

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childish. They're afraid of offending the Moslems. Now listen to me."

"Go ahead. I'm listening."

"Have a drink. Help yourself. Now who would stand to gain most by stealing weapons? Eh? Who are they who want to possess a country owned at present by Arabs—who are being threatened everlastingly by Arabs—who have no weapons of their own, and whose grip on the country is only made temporarily possible by an army of occupation dependent on the whims of a Foreign Office? The Zionists, eh? D'you get me?"

"Then you mean——"

"I mean this: The Arabs have lots of weapons hidden away. The Zionists have none—or had none until this thieving started. The Zionists believe, what I'm quite sure of, that they're going to get left in the lurch by our Foreign Office sooner or later. So they've hired Arabs to steal rifles for them, for Jews to use against Arabs later on. D'you follow me?"

"I see the drift."

"Kettle and Anthony and the rest of them imagine that the Zionists are going to have it all their own way with the backing of the British Government. But I know better. I happen to have influential connections at home who keep me posted; and between you and me the Zionists are going to be told before long to paddle their own canoe.

"Of course, the Zionists have their own friends at the Foreign Office, who keep them posted, too; they know as well as you and I do what's likely to happen, and that the minute it does they'll be at the mercy of the Arabs unless they can arm themselves in advance. Failing arms, they'll have to get out of the country. That's inevitable finally; they'll have to get out. You can take my word for it, the solution of this Palestine problem is going to be an Arab kingdom. The Zionists haven't a chance."

Jim saw no reason to argue with a man who chose to back a losing horse. He sat still.

"I rather think General Anthony himself suspects this thieving is the work of Zionists," Jenkins went on. "But he's afraid of Zionists, as well as more than half in favor of them. I'm not. I know which side my bread is buttered on, and I'm pro-Arab to the core. Are you?"

"I'm extremely partial to Arabs," Jim answered guardedly. "Can't help liking them."

"So we'll just take a fall out of the Zionists ahead of time, and let the Arabs know who their individual friends are, with an eye to the future. Get after that *iblis*, as they call him, Grim, as soon as you like. Scratch him and I think you'll find a Jew; if not, you'll discover a Jew somewhere back of him."

"I thought of getting on his trail tonight," said Jim.

"Good. Do. Report to me and to no one else. See you in the morning, then. So long."

TEN minutes later Jim turned up at Catesby's tent.

"No 'home on a trooper' for you, old man! This Jenkins bird is going to provide you with work."

"But you've got to whitewash the brute!"

"Sure. The Lord alone knows how yet, but he shall have such an elegant ducking in white paint that it won't ever come off. Your parole's to be raised for fourteen days, and we'll work together to pump Jinks so full of self-importance that he'll burst. Meanwhile, I'll get some sleep. You do the same. Don't forget, if anybody asks, that you need liberty to hunt up evidence to clear yourself. So long."

CHAPTER IV

"Moreover, Jimgrim, you are my friend!"

NO CITY in the world can vie with a great camp for binding spells, by night especially; for the city only represents what men have done, whereas the camp allures with what they mean to do. The policeman at a crossing signifies that what today approves tomorrow will repeat. The sentry with firelight dancing on his pointed steel denotes the alertness of unfolding destiny. The entertainment of a city is the fruit of things accomplished, growing rotten, but the thrilling murmur of a camp by night is the prelude to new heavens and a new earth.

There was no moon when Jim led the way between the whickering horse-lines, followed by Catesby, Narayan Singh and Suliman. They were all dressed as Arabs, so that every sentry challenged them, and once a bayonet point pierced through Jim's garments to his skin before he could reply; for the Sikh on duty likes his ceremony swift, and takes no chances.

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Each time that Jim whispered the password the four were followed into the shadows by wondering, suspicious eyes; then, as if afterthought increased suspicion, the sentry's voice would call out harshly to the next ahead, and three times before they reached the camp gate an officer was fetched to quiz them.

In no single instance did Jim give the names of his party, not even when the guard at the gap in a barbed wire fence that they called the south gate held them up for five minutes and scoffed at the slip of paper he produced. He did not want his movements gossiped all over the camp. So they were all four submitted to search at the gate as presumptive thieves, by a Sikh *jemadar* who feared not writing nor regarded words.

His disrespectful fingers uncovered naturally three loaded automatic pistols; and—ace of unexpectedness—a Gurkha kukri from under Hassan's shirt. That settled it, of course.

"Into the lock-up with them until morning!" he ordered, being one of those priceless guardians who are not afraid of responsibility

"The luck's not running my way," grumbled Catesby. "This'll give Jinks the finest chance the brute could ask for to show me up in a bad light. My name's Walker!"

"Don't you believe it. Cut loose, Narayan Singh," Jim whispered.

There followed an interlude in the Jat dialect that restored Catesby's normal high spirits, it being one of the conventions of the British Army that an officer of Sikhs must understand the language of his men, whereas the men's knowledge of English is optional and rather rare. It ended in Narayan Singh disrobing in the guard-room light to show his steel bracelet, the steel dagger in his hair, and certain other peculiarities of Sikh attire to which he is more loyal than a Scotchman to his kilts. Those, the language, and an intimate knowledge of the *jemadar's* own personal, private and amusingly immoral history proved at last convincing.

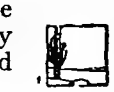
But the *jemadar* kept the kukri. There was no explaining that away.

"How shall I hunt an *iblis* without that thing?" demanded Suliman, appealing to Jim in the shadow much too wise too argue with the Sikh.

"Where did you get it? Did a Gurkha lend it to you?"

"No. The fool refused. So I stole it while he drank."

"Come on. We've wasted time enough. You must face the *iblis* with bare hands."



NOW Catesby led, for he knew the lie of the land. Jim followed him, and Narayan Singh brought up the rear in darkness so deep that it was all one could do to keep the leading man in sight. The sky overhead was clear, and the stars shone like scattered diamonds, but they were following a shallow *wady** between cactus, and the gloom of the night before the worlds were made seemed to have gathered in it. They went nearly a mile at a slow pace before Catesby stopped to take his bearings. Then Jim missed Suliman.

He did not dare shout for him, for that would have brought to the scene every scrub-haunting thief in the neighborhood. He called once in a low voice, but all the answer was the ghoul-like laugh of a hyena, and a moment later he made out the brute's green eyes, very low to the ground and moving the way a lantern swings.

"I rather thought it was a mistake to bring that kid," said Catesby. "Didn't like to question your judgment of course, but——"

"He comes. I hear him, *sahib*," Narayan Singh whispered.

A moment later the hyena snarled and scampered off, looking as big as a lion when his outline showed against the sky. Then they heard whimpering and hard breathing. Something or somebody stumbled, sobbed, and hurried on again toward them. Then Suliman burst into their midst and threw himself face foremost on the earth, heaving for lack of breath. He had something heavy in his hand. Jim picked it up.

"The kukri again! You young *luss* (robber)! How did you get it?"

"That *jemadar* gave it to a sentry to hold, and the sentry laid it beside him on the ground where he could feel it with his foot. So I pulled the skirt of his overcoat and took the kukri when he turned. Then I ran."

"And he didn't shoot?"

"No, for I took care that he saw me. Sikhs don't shoot at men of my size, for I have tried before."

"Now," said Jim, "do you still think I was wrong to bring the kid? Lead on, Catesby."

*Valley.

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THEY took to the top of a sandy ridge that led gradually upward to a low hill covered with cactus, from which by daylight there would be a fair view of half the camp, although now they could see little more than scattered lights that made the darkness more confusing. There was a short bare ridge on the hilltop, sandy like the rest but free from cactus.

"Suppose we lie here till moonrise," Catesby proposed. "Last time I saw the *iblis* was from just this place. I was waiting for a chance at a leopard and friend leper came instead, scaring everything away for miles around. He pretty nearly scared me stiff. Most awful looking brute you ever saw.

"You see that hill opposite? You can just make out the outline of it against the sky. He danced on that and made me feel so creepy I vowed I'd never dance again. Later he passed along this ridge so close that I thought he'd trip over me. Ugh! I was glad he didn't. He's leprous from head to foot. It beats me how he holds together when he dances."

They lay down on a shoulder of sand that overhung the shallow valley; and now the Arab costume they were wearing proved its virtue, for they could cover faces, hands and ankles from the mosquitoes that attacked in mass formation. Hooded like that under loose robes they looked like dead men. A badger came and sniffed them, then a hyena, then several jackals, remembering perhaps the fat times when men were fighting and the carrion lay thick.

They lay an hour until the moon rose, like a huge blotched lamp beyond the other hill, and by that time Suliman was fast asleep and snoring. Narayan Singh shook him awake—lest he frighten the *iblis* away, as the Sikh was careful to explain. The notion that the *iblis* might be afraid of himself was new to Suliman, and he sat up to consider it, fingering the edge of the heavy, curved Gurkha blade.

"The game is to catch this beauty alive if we can," said Jim, "but above all we mustn't scare him and let him get away from us. Better watch him for a week than rush in and fail. The next most important thing is not to kill him—bear that in mind, Narayan Singh; even you can't make a dead man talk, you know!"

"I will plunge this kukri in his belly and discover whether an *iblis* has entrails if he comes near me!" vowed Suliman.

But a moment later he returned the great knife to its sheath and crept up close to Jim, with the hair rising so that his turban actually lifted.

"Look, Jimgrim! Look! The *iblis!*"

Naked in the reddish moonlight—framed, in fact, exactly in the middle of the orb that rose behind him, about two hundred yards distant from where they lay across the *wady*—glistening here and there as if his carcass had been smeared with whitish slime, a tall, lean, muscular man stood motionless, gazing toward the lights that indicated Ludd encampment.

The turban on his head but emphasized the nakedness of all the rest of him. Nowhere in the East is the mere absence of clothes remarkable as a rule, although the Arab likes to drape himself in ample, loose array for the sake of dignity and comfort. But that man's nakedness was ghastly—impudent—a calculated, sheer affront—deliberate indecency so flaunted that the moonlight and the loneliness could not absorb it, and it shocked grown men.

He was well shaped. No crippled limbs or unnatural abortion helped to horrify. It was an arrogance of nakedness, made monstrous by the will to assert itself. If he had stood among a hundred naked men, he alone would have seemed unclothed, and if you had clothed him he might likely have seemed naked still because of the outrageous insolence that owned him.

For minute after minute he stood gazing at the camp, with his stomach thrust out in an attitude of self-complacency and his arms folded across his chest. Then, as if the turban on his head were too much concession to the prejudice of other folk, he began to unwind the thing, coiling the yards of cloth around his arm.

"What did I tell you?" whispered Catesby. "Isn't he a horror? Isn't he a gruesome swine?"

"In my land there are millions with no more than a yard or two of rag apiece; but that thing there is an insult to the gods, and he should die!" declared Narayan Singh.

"Nevertheless, remember what I said. Don't kill him," Jim answered. "He thinks he knows something or he wouldn't like himself so much. Let's find out."

The man began to posture on the hilltop, taking attitudes suggestive of the figures on Egyptian temple walls. He seemed conscious of the fact that the rising

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moon served as spotlight as well as background, for his movements were deliberately calculated to show up in silhouette. They were slow and strong and snakelike, but little by little the snake idea gained ascendancy until his whole body writhed in serpentine contortions.

THEN he began to dance. You could not watch the man and tear yourself away or make a move against him. He had the faculty of stirring curiosity and holding it, so that each move was a fascinating prelude to the next and you had to wait to see.

The dance began with a rapid repetition of the Egyptian poses, so skilfully done that the infinitely tiny pause between each movement served to fix each posture in the watchers' vision, and the whole became a motion picture in staccato time.

All that while he kept the turban draped about his arm and it looked like an excrescence—something or other horrible—sometimes as if he had three arms on his right side, two growing out of one. But all at once he began to whirl the thing about him like a lariat until it formed a Saturn ring, in the midst of which he spun like a top on tiptoe, dervish fashion.

Whoever on the countryside saw that would understand the meaning of it. The whirling turban was only an added stroke of genius to emphasize his eminence among his kind.

The dancing dervish claims that by spinning for a length of time on tiptoe he can rid himself of human limitation and see clearly into the infinite. The ordinary dervish apes an arrogant humility before he starts; this fellow was assuming to confer with spiritual essences with banner whirling in the breeze—that was the only difference. There might be Moslems after that who would question his claim to miraculous vision and sanctity, but not many of them, and they would be kept in order by the rest.

Suliman, with the creed of his ancestors half-learned and wholly in his veins, was quite convinced.

"That is truly an *iblis*," he whispered with chattering teeth. "There is nothing for us to do but leave him, Jimgrim."

But Jim was thinking then too busily to quiet the superstitious qualms of a small boy.

"Narayan Singh!"

The Sikh crept closer.

"Do you know the lie of the land here?"

"No, *sahib*. But I could crawl up close and rush the brute. If I may not slay, I could hold him until you come and bind him with the turban."

"Catesby!"

The three laid their heads together.

"Is there any way of coming up behind him?"

"No. Not without making a circuit of more than a mile. This hill we're on juts out from a ridge that leads in a curve to his hill. There's a thirty-foot cliff of sand on this side of him, too steep to climb in the dark. If we follow the ridge he'd see us coming, unless we could get there before he stops spinning, and at that he has likely got a spy or two on the watch. To come up from behind him through the cactus would take twenty minutes."

"Jimgrim *sahib!*"

Narayan Singh laid a hand on Jim's sleeve.

"If I steady this automatic on my forearm," the Sikh continued, "resting my elbow on the ground—thus—in three or four shots I can hit him in the leg with certainty. Then he will limp, and we can catch him. Only say the word."

"No."

"The last time I saw him he came straight along the ridge and passed me after he'd finished the ballet," whispered Catesby.

"Give him a chance to do it again."

The *iblis* pirouetted interminably, gaining rather than losing speed, the ring of cloth spreading out around him in an ever widening circle. If he really was a leper, then the disease had made strangely little inroad on his stamina.

And for all that whoever watched grew giddy, the *iblis* himself retained full consciousness. For there came cloaked figures of men, who dodged in the shadows from bush to bush; and as they drew near he was aware of them and began to slow down gradually, letting the turban droop in ever narrowing curves, until he stood stock-still again, back to the moon, like a statue, glistening with sweat that made him shine now from head to foot instead of showing sliminess in patches.

After standing rigid for about two minutes he stretched out his right arm toward the camp, and suddenly his voice boomed like a tenor bell, cursing in Arabic, cursing in

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the name of Allah the Lord of Creatures, the Prince of the Day of Judgment, cursing man and beast and tent and mechanism—eye, hand, ear and brain.

One couldn't catch half the words across that distance, but Jim's ears were alert for something else. His own peculiar gift, attained by infinite application, lay in distinguishing dialects apart, so that he sometimes disguised himself in one place, where the least slip might have floored him, by using the dialect of another district, a thing that very few Arabs themselves can do and very few suspect is possible.

"WHAT do you make of him?" he whispered.

"I've seen his kind in the mosques of Mosul and Marash," Catesby whispered. "I think he's simply a dancing dervish from up north, driven away very likely because of his leprosy."

But Jim, too, had been in Mosul and Marash and seen the dancing dervishes. He reserved judgment.

The *iblis* turned at last toward the hooded figures that were crouching near him; and now he stretched out both arms, but whether or not he blessed them was not clear, for he lowered his voice. However, after a minute or two it was quite plain that he urged them to a certain course, for he flung his right hand out like an emperor ordering armies, and his chin went up so imperiously high that the moonlight sheened on his fierce eyes.

The hooded figures vanished. They had come from different directions, but as far as one could judge in the uncertain light they were headed one way in single file when they disappeared into the cactus.

"——!" Jim muttered suddenly, and Narayan Singh crept close again.

"Yes, *sahib?* What is it?"

"Can't you see? The *iblis* has gone too—and the wrong way for us, durn him!—toward the moon—due east. If we chase him now he'll simply run."

"I can stalk him, *sahib.* He will never see me."

"No. The others are coming straight along the ridge toward us."

"I can slip by them, *sahib.* It is darker than death in the shadows."

"We can do better than that. Catesby?"

Once again you might have laid a handkerchief on all three heads.

"They're coming one by one. Bag the last one alive. Catesby, you collar him around the knees. Narayan Singh, gag him; take Suliman's turban—have it ready in your hand. I'll pin his arms and get his knife away. I'll whistle low to startle him, and then all three of us spring together, downing him at once into the shadow where his friends can't see."

They stowed Suliman in a hollow just over the shoulder of the hill, and crawled into position where a foot-track passed between an ant-hill and a big cactus bush in a shallow, spoon-shaped depression of the hill-top. They had hardly hidden themselves when the first man came swinging along at a sort of dog-trot, the pace common to most savage and nearly savage people bent on adventure. He passed so close that they might have touched him, and the reek of cotton clothing soaked in oil was unmistakable.

Six men passed, all going at the same pace, all smelling strongly of the same rancid unguent, with about ten yards between each, dog-trotting to the night's work and in no particular concern just yet to conceal themselves. The seventh man lagged a little, being heavier than the rest and not so free-breathing.

As he drew abreast of them Jim whistled. But instead of checking his pace to look about him the man sprang into the air like a shot buck, and landed in his stride intent on sprinting.

Jim, Catesby and Narayan Singh all sprang at the same instant, and crashed their heads together. But for Catesby's Rugby football days they would have missed their man; but instinct, born of following the ball though a whole pack pounce on him, sent Catesby's right arm shooting out of the scrimmage. Groping wildly at the air, he caught the Arab's ankle. It was greased, but the check before the Arab freed it tripped him, and before he could recover balance all three captors were on top of him, crashing together into the cactus bush.

The Arab could not yell with agony, because Narayan Singh's steely wrists clapped on the cotton gag and held it in place, come life come judgment day. And the Sikh, being topmost, got fewest of the cactus stabs, so swore least. Catesby, underneath, with his arms about the fellow's legs, cursed like a wet cat, hissing canteen blasphemy

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between set teeth; and Jim, side by side with the prisoner in a bed of inch-long thorns, kept at his task in panting speechlessness that was just as eloquent. There are few points that hurt more acutely than those of a Holy Land cactus.

Jim got the fellow's knife at last, and dropped it in the murderous mess of spikes they fought among. But to hold his arms was another matter. The Arab was greased from head to foot, and his clothes, which might otherwise have served to hold him by were rotten with the oil, tearing wherever they were seized. As the clothing came away from him in rags his naked skin slipped from the grasp more readily than ever; and he was stronger than a bear—sinewy and lithe and, for all his weight, able to wriggle any section of himself that wasn't pegged down tight.

Three or four times he seemed about to slip away from them, struggling like an eel. But Narayan Singh's knee in his stomach combined with the unyielding gag to rob him of breath, so that at last they all rolled out into the open and Jim gasped out a request to Catesby to take his girdle off and bind the fellow's hands and feet.

CATESBY was only in the nick of time at that. Struggling to his knees, he was aware of something flashing brightly in the moonlight from behind the ruined cactus bush. He sprang into the shadow and caught Suliman's kukri in the act of descending on the Arab's undefended neck, whirled in both hands like an ax by the eight-year-old. He threw Suliman into the cactus to whimper and recover rectitude.

Then when they had trussed their prisoner and had picked most of the thorns out of him they sat and operated on themselves by moonlight, using pocket-knives and finger-nails and hard words, giving the Arab time to get his breath and think up some lies to tell them presently.

It was no use trying to pretend they themselves were Arabs any longer, for they had sworn too lustily in English, to say nothing of Jim's instructions anent the girdle, and Narayan Singh's hoarse imprecations in another tongue.

"Perhaps it's as well," laughed Jim. "Here, Catesby, be a good chap and dig this thorn out from behind my knee. He'll be so puzzled that perhaps he'll lie less, if we can get him to say anything at all. Where's Suliman?"

"I am here. I look for the kukri. It was not the act of a true *khawaja** to throw me in that cactus bush. If you are my *mutahid*,† Jimgrim, you will see that I have full vengeance!"

"I'll avenge you. Wait and see. Let's ask the prisoner what he thinks about it. Have you found the kukri?"

Suliman flourished it in the moonlight. Jim stooped over the prisoner and lifted him into a sitting attitude; at sight of the kukri whirling near his head he ducked and fell over again sidewise; for his hands were tied under his knees and one can't keep balanced as well as struggle in that position. Jim lifted him again.

"Now," he said in Arabic, "this child vows you are an *iblis;* and he has sworn by the beard of the Prophet to kill the first *iblis* that he sees. We are his friends, here to help him do it. What do you say to that?"

"You have caught the wrong one. I am no *iblis*."

"You fight like one, and you smell worse than one. What then are you?"

"I am a thief."

The man threw such pride into the assertion that Catesby and Narayan Singh both laughed. But Jim was too intent on something else. He shifted his own position so that the moonlight shone directly in the man's face—then nodded.

"Look at me carefully, Mahommed ben Hamza. Do you know me?"

"Jimgrim! *Ilhamdillal* (Thank God!) Now I am all right."

"No, you're not, you scoundrel!"

"Man without virtue I may be, since Jimgrim says it, who knows so much; but not for nothing did I help thee at El-Kerak, when a word from me would have ended thy career. I say I am all right. *Ilhamdillal*"

"You think I'm easy," Jim answered, "but I tell you my friends here are ruthless."

"Then you and I will fight them. I am not afraid."

"What brought you from thieving in the Hebron *suk?*‡"

"What were you doing yonder?"

---

*Gentleman.
†Partner. The word has a gang significance.
‡Market.

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JIM pointed to the hill two hundred yards away on which the leper had danced.

"What but obtaining magic against bullet and bayonet? What else could a dervish do for me? However, he forgot to bless me for ambushment by the way, or even you, Jimgrim, would not have been clever or strong enough to take me, with twice as many men."

"Then you think his dance is efficacious?"

"Surely. All the thieves go to him, and how many get caught? A very few get shot, and a very few get stabbed, but those are the ones who scoffed at him. He is a driver of hard bargains, but his magic works."

"Hard bargains, eh?"

"Leper's bargains! A man must leave two-thirds of all he steals, or the equivalent, at a place appointed, or suffer the curse. None dares fail him."

"I drive still harder bargains," Jim answered.

"Aye, and keep them. Loose my bonds, Jimgrim; thou and I are old friends."

"Not so fast. Are your wife and child at Hebron, Mahommed ben Hamza?"

"Unless ill luck overtook them between yesterday and now."

"And you still own the little vineyard—that profitable little vineyard beside the Jerusalem Road?"

"Surely. That was my father's legacy to me, his firstborn."

"And the stone house in the Haret el-Akkabi*—does that belong to you still?"

"Aye."

"Since I have caught you red-handed on your way to steal from Ludd Camp, and you have confessed in front of witnesses, do you not see I am in position to drive a very hard bargain?"

"Between friends?"

"Between a thief and one who can get that thief fined so heavily that there would be no more orchard paying profits on the Jerusalem Road, and no more home in the Haret el-Akkabi to bequeath to an only son."

"You would not do that, Jimgrim!"

"I spoke of a bargain."

"Well?"

"Where is that leper to be found by daylight?"

"None knows. None dares inquire."

"Where is the place appointed for his share of the plunder to be left?"

"It is never twice the same."

"Where have you been told to leave two-thirds of what you proposed to steal tonight?"

"Ah-h-h!"

"My friend the Governor of Hebron keeps a nice, clean jail, it is true," said Jim. "And my friend Moustapha Aziz the auctioneer obtains good prices, too. There might be a little something left to you after the fine was paid."

"Jimgrim, if I thought you were a liar I would take my chance. The court would never fine me all that much, for since the Turks left there is a law like mother's milk. But you are such a devil that I think you could arrange it. I suppose you know of other charges you could lay against me, and who shall stand against your persistence? Moreover, you are my friend."

"Answer my question then."

"I can not describe the place."

"Is it near here?"

"Yes."

"Then lead us to it."

"Jimgrim, I am afraid. That dervish who has no name is a capable fellow. He can curse!"

"And I, who hold you prisoner, know all about your property. Which is the lesser evil—a curse that might miss——"

"*Inshallal*"

"Or my flat promise to get after you in Hebron?"

Mahommed ben Hamza smiled as winningly as a child with a cause to plead.

"You I know of old, Jimgrim. The dervish is new and talks a lot, but his talking did not save me from being caught tonight. Besides, you are my friend. I will lead you to the place."

"Loose his feet, Narayan Singh. Then tie his hands behind his back."

"Nay, Jimgrim! Have I questioned your word once, or lied to you once? Did I lie to you at El-Kerak, when at a word from me they would have thrown you from the castle roof?"

Jim hesitated. He did not want to be hampered by a prisoner on his hands that night, yet he would have had to return to camp in order to lock him up. But on the other hand he did not want the responsibility of letting him go. The best plan seemed to be to make a stipulation with definite limits, which the man would probably observe implicitly and then vamoose.

*The quarter of the makers of goatskin water-bags.

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"Just what do you promise?" he asked.

"I will lead you to the place where the dervish told us we must leave his *bakshish*."

"All right. Swear to it."

"By the holy mosque of El-Kalil—by the tomb of my father, on whom be blessings—by the——"

"That will do. Loose him, Narayan Singh—but keep a close eye on him."

"*Mashallah!* I could not run if I were minded," laughed Mahommed ben Hamza, stretching himself. "I would rather a camel knelt on my belly another time than that fellow of yours who gagged me. This way, your honors."

HE LED them along the ridge toward the spot where the leper had danced, and now the moon was shining so brightly and at such an angle that whoever was abroad could hardly have helped seeing them the moment they should desert the scant cover of the scrub. Mahommed ben Hamza did not care; his own need of secrecy was at an end for that night, and his part of the bargain was to show the way; he deliberately chose the open path until Jim called a halt, midway along the ridge.

There he left Catesby and Narayan Singh, bidding Suliman mark the place carefully.

"Now down on your belly and crawl!" he ordered. "And if you make a noise or show yourself you shall surely wish I was only a camel; I'll land on top of you like a troop of cavalry! You, too, Suliman—crawl!"

On hands and knees, picking out the shadows of the cactus and taking their chance of snakes, centipedes and scorpions, they crept up to the spot where the leper had danced, and Jim went aside to examine it, wondering what sort of hollow his pirouetting must have scooped out in the sand. But in place of a hole was an ancient Moslem tombstone long since fallen flat, and now worn smooth in the middle where the man's feet had rubbed it night after night.

"Come away, Jimgrim; the place is bewitched!" Mahommed ben Hamza whispered.

But Jim was not satisfied until he had worked his fingers under the stone and lifted it to see what might be underneath. For the next three minutes he was busy killing about a dozen of the little deadly vipers that infest the plains of Palestine, using the kukri snatched from Suliman's hand.

"What did I tell you?" grumbled Mahommed ben Hamza. "Did not I say it is bewitched?"

After that they crawled down-hill, scouting extremely carefully because the moon shone on a smooth surface of sand where cactus and shadow were scant. At the foot of the long slope was a winding nullah, and there, because of the shadow, they dared stand upright. Mahommed ben Hamza led along it to a sandy amphitheater a quarter of a mile away, and stopped in front of one of those open tombs with which all Palestine abounds.

"There, that is the place."

"Inside or outside?"

"We were to lay the loot inside."

"Go in and see if the leper is in there now."

"Allah forbid! Besides, Jimgrim, my bargain is finished. I was to lead to the place, that is all."

"True."

"Having kept my promise I am now free."

"Gee, that was foolish of me! I ordered Narayan Singh to keep his eye on you, and then left him behind."

"So now I go. Good-by, Jimgrim. Don't shoot, for the dervish might hear—and besides you are my friend!"

"But if I catch you away from Hebron before I visit the place," Jim answered, "you shall wish I had shot you, do you understand? After all, I think—perhaps——"

He drew his automatic and cocked it very deliberately; but Mahommed ben Hamza was out of sight among the shadows almost before the spring of the pistol clicked.

CHAPTER V

"Aye, father of reprimands, but where?"

CATESBY and Narayan Singh waited interminably, watching the moon mount overhead and passing from mere impatient restlessness to anxiety as more than an hour went by without any sign of Jim. Officer and enlisted man, Englishman and Sikh, they naturally kept their distance, each respecting the other's prejudices; and they lay low for fear of scouting desert thieves. Once they heard a shot ring out somewhere in the direction of the camp, but that was nothing unusual since thieves had become so busy.

At last Narayan Singh crawled close to Catesby and with an upward jerk of his

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thumb toward the moon began to speak in that low voice which is so hugely better than a whisper.

"*Sahib*, I have orders to bring our Jimgrim back to Jerusalem alive!"

"What do you propose, Narayan Singh?"

"My order to take care of him was from my own colonel, *sahib*. It is good to obey."

"We'll give him ten more minutes. If he doesn't come then or send the boy for us we'll try to find him."

"Good."

Narayan Singh spent most of the ten minutes examining his pistol and a long, keen knife that he carried under his tunic, arranging both so that he could reach them instantly with either hand. But there remained ninety interminable seconds.

"Let me see your pistol, *sahib*. I have known these automatics to jam. Sand in the fodder kills mules and horses, but I have seen officers die more quickly for lack of a man to detect sand in their pistol locks."

Catesby laughed and handed the weapon over. It is only the raw subaltern who is too proud to be nursed by the war-wise enlisted man. Aware that his weapon was spotlessly clean, he was too wise to discourage the Sikh's thoughtfulness.

"Now are the ten minutes not up?"

"Thirty seconds," said Catesby, glancing at his wrist-watch. "Pistol all right?"

"A little heavy on the pull. Is it a new one?"

"Yes."

"Then take care to aim to the left, *sahib*, if it has to be used in a hurry. Now—?"

"Yes, come on."

Catesby led, but only for the sake of form. Narayan Singh's low voice from just behind did all the counseling.

"Jimgrim went first to the place where the *shaitan** danced. I saw him."

The shadows were shorter now, and it was not so easy to keep cover and make rapid progress. On the hill-top they abandoned all effort to conceal themselves. Catesby stooped to examine the tomb-stone, and discovered some of the snakes that Jim had killed with the kukri. But Narayan Singh had seen them first.

"Beware, *sahib*! A snake dies slowly; cut in halves they can bite yet for an hour or two."

He fidgeted until Catesby came away from them.

* Devil.

Now the moon proved friend as well as enemy, for the Sikh's keen eyes picked up the trail Mahommed ben Hamza made in the sand, crossed once in a while by those of Jim and Suliman hurrying from bush to bush. But at the bottom of the long slope where the footsteps turned into the narrow *wady* they were confused by those of six or seven more men hurrying in single file in the same direction. In the one spot where the moonlight shone on the bed of the *wady* Narayan Singh stooped and scooped up a handful of earth. It was sticky. He beckoned Catesby into a hollow on one side of the track.

"Strike a match, *sahib*. Carefully! A match can be seen for miles. Thus—ah—blood it is, and almost warm—scarcely begun to harden."

They both examined every inch of the ground for ten or fifteen yards.

"There was no fight in this place. Whoever bled got his punishment elsewhere. Perhaps they carried a wounded man—who can tell in this dim light? See—there is blood again, *sahib*! Shall we follow?"

There was nothing else they could do in the circumstances. It was surely contrary to all the rules of warfare, civilized or guerilla, for two men in the dark to stalk seven down a narrow, winding *wady*, around any turn of which the seven might wait and pounce on them.

But Catesby was no whit behind Narayan Singh in eagerness to serve his friend; and to turn back was as unthinkable, for instance, as to let the Sikh go first into danger, even if his were the keenest eyes. There are prerogatives that no man willingly relinquishes. Catesby strode forward.

FIFTY-FOUR paces down the *wady*, by his own count, he tripped and nearly fell over an Arab corpse.

For a minute they took cover near the corpse and listened. Then Narayan Singh knelt beside it and his long, brown fingers searched swiftly. Some one had covered up the face with the headdress and bound the covering fast. He tugged it off.

"God be praised, it is not Jimgrim!" he growled. "The body is quite warm—not dead ten minutes."

His fingers searched inside the clothes and presently found the "emergency exit" through which the man's life had fled.

"He died by a bayonet, *sahib*. Come and

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feel. There is no mistaking that wound. Likely a Sikh did it, for the thrust forced the middle ribs apart and broke the lower one. These were camp-thieves returning from the night's work, and one got more than he bargained for."

The fingers searched again, feeling skilfully for anything of value; but the man's friends had taken that precaution first, and even the usual amulets and necklace of prayer-beads were missing. However, the farther East a man is born the more meticulously detailed is his genius for looting (so that the Punjaubi and the Jew from Bokhara can thrive where the Arab starves, the Chinaman can fatten on what they leave, and the Japanese outthieves them all).

Presently the Sikh found a piece of paper money tucked in the girdle of the man's loose trousers, and passed it up to Catesby, who crouched in a hollow elbow of the *wady* side to strike a match and examine it.

It proved to be a hundred-piaster note, torn down the middle and pasted together on the back with a strip of coarse white paper on which something was written in Arabic; but he could not stay to spell it out by matchlight, for he had only a scraping acquaintance with the language.

Narayan Singh covered the dead man's face again and waited for Catesby to lead on, but the Englishman hesitated. Thieves (supposing that they were thieves) who took such trouble to cover up a dead man's face were hardly likely to leave the body long at the mercy of jackals and hyenas.

There was apparently only one possible way they could take returning. They might send two men back for the body, or return in force. He might leave Narayan Singh in hiding there to watch, and scout forward alone. Narayan Singh could deal alone with two or three men; but six or seven would overwhelm him.

Finally he adopted the inevitable British compromise and, beckoning the Sikh to follow him, turned back a little way to avoid making more footmarks on the sand. At the first place where the bank of the *wady* sloped fairly easily he began to climb it and discovered, as he expected, easy enough going at the top.

"Now, Narayan Singh, we'll scout along together as far as the last point from which we can overlook the *wady*. There I'll leave you and carry on. If I need you I'll fire my pistol. If you need me, do the same.

"You won't be able to see down into the *wady*, but if anybody comes along it you can hear; in that case scout closer. Shoot to kill if you want to, but mind you don't shoot Jimgrim *sahib* by mistake!"

The Sikh's disgust and disappointment were as plain as if he had dared voice them. A hound called off a hot scent to be put on a chain would have submitted as cheerfully. He approved neither of dividing forces nor of squandering his own trained senses on any passive form of usefulness.

"Forward, *sahib!*" he urged; and the tone of his voice bordered on insolence. "Shall Jimgrim and the *butcha* need us and we play vulture above a carcass?"

Catesby laughed dryly.

"Do as I say," he ordered.

They were able to go quite a long way without losing sight of the black, velvet-looking belt of gloom that was the *wady* bottom, and Catesby's plan proved not so contemptible after all. Keeping a company of Sikhs in fighting trim for months past had given him a knowledge of all that countryside that could not desert him in the dark, and presently they reached a low eminence from which they could look down into the *wady* in either direction.

By that time, too, the moon shone at such an angle that the darkness below them was considerably broken up and patches of sand were beginning to be visible in places. To their left, clearly outlined in the yellow light, lay a sandy amphitheater, and if they had only known it they could see the opening of the tomb to which the Arab had led Jim and Suliman.

Nevertheless they seemed to have missed their opportunity, and Narayan Singh suddenly swore a streak of Indian oaths that would have made a mere comminating prelate shudder with mixed envy and dread. Down below them, passing in single file across a yellow sand-patch to their right, they caught sight of men's figures moving swiftly. Catesby counted five, the Sikh six; but there might have been more because of the shadows, and some might have crossed the patch of light before they saw the others. They were all swallowed in black night again before the brain could get any clear impression of their general appearance.

Catesby made up his mind swiftly enough then, and Narayan Singh approved, since decision entailed action.

"Come on! After them from the rear!'

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They slid down the sand-bank into the *wady* and started to run, keeping in the middle where the track was loose and soft, so as to make less noise. Neither man knew exactly what they meant to do other than force the party ahead to stand and give an account of themselves. If that should entail a free fight, well and good; the Sikh, at least, would sooner fight than not, and Catesby had no objection.

But the one paramount, essential objective was to get tidings of Jim Grim, and neither of them made a single stipulation as to ways or means. They simply ran.

Whether or not they were gaining on their quarry they never knew; for suddenly, down the sand-bank just abreast of them, panting, staggering, tripping, tottering, tumbling into their arms to sob and cling to them, Suliman came like a bolt out of the night—too scared and breathless to explain himself, kicking and punching at Narayan Singh because he should comprehend without words—too bewildered to speak English to Catesby, who had scant Arabic.

Catesby was not much of a hand with children. He tried sternness to antidote hysteria, and succeeded only in making his victim cry. So Narayan Singh squatted in the *wady* as if time were no consideration, and took the boy in his lap.

"A brave fellow!" he said. "Truly a brave fellow! Out in the night alone and not afraid of leopards! A soldier in the making! A swift runner! A man of deeds, not words! A scout who knows friends in the dark and can find them! A skirmisher who takes a cliff-side like a war-horse galloping! Truly a proper friend for such an one as Jimgrim! And what said Jimgrim? I wager he had a message for Narayan Singh?"

"Curse your religion! Curse your mother and her family! What are you waiting for! Let me go!"

The youngster struggled, and struck the Sikh's face with his fists, but stirred no reprisals. Narayan Singh held on and laughed.

"Aha! A ruffian! A fighting man! A very Rustum* at the age of eight! I wager Jimgrim sent him out to fight the *iblis!*"

The word *iblis* loosed the floods of speech at last. Suliman spat into the Sikh's black beard and followed up the illustration with his text.

"Come and get him! Come quick! The *iblis* sits and spits at him! Jimgrim is bewitched. The *iblis* curses him. Jimgrim's pistol is bewitched; he can't use it. The *iblis* laughs. I ran to find you and you were gone, so I came back to kill the *iblis* with my kukri. Now you sit and grin, you son of sixty dogs, while the *iblis* murders Jimgrim. Have you no heart? Have you no courage? Jimgrim is in danger!"

"Aye, father of reprimands! But where?"

"Where? In the cave, of course! In the cave, idiot!"

"Which cave, O father of whirlwinds?"

"Which cave, Narayan Singh? As if there were more than one! Can Jimgrim be in two caves?"

"Can you lead us to the cave?"

"No! I have lost my way!"

That admission was altogether too much for Catesby, who was listening in shadow. He stepped closer to try again what stern authority might do. But Narayan Singh waved him back with an imploring gesture, and resumed the milder method.

"Such a scout! Such a father of long memories! I wager he has not forgotten what I taught him in Jerusalem. You were in the cave, Suliman? And you came out of the cave? Then on which side shone the moon—on this or that hand? This hand I wager. No? That one? Ah! And you crossed this *wady* to reach the place where I waited with the *sahib?* Ah! Then the cave is this way. Come!"

HE GOT UP, took the child by the hand and led him along the *wady* in the opposite direction to that in which they had been running, Catesby following in agonies of impatience. At every projection Narayan Singh would stop and try to get the boy to recognize it, but it was not until they reached the open amphitheater that Sulliman gave a gasp of sheer excitement and began to run.

"There! There is the cave! I see it! Hurry, Narayan Singh! Curse you for a crawling beetle! Pick me up and carry me, I am *halas*—finish!"

Narayan Singh gathered him up in his hairy arms, gentle as a woman's, but as strong as two pythons, and broke into a double. The moonlight shone straight into the cave mouth, and Catesby, having no load, reached it first. By the time Narayan Singh overtook him and had set down

*A famous warrior.

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Suliman, Catesby was disappearing head first into a black hole, sending his voice ahead of him:

"Grim! Hullo! Jim Grim! Hullo, Uncle Sam, are you there? The reserves are coming, Grim—hold on!"

Suliman was next into the hole, charging under the Sikh's legs and pulling out his kukri as he scrambled, yelling too:

"O Jimgrim! *Taib** Jimgrim! All right, Jimgrim! Coming! We are here!"

They plunged forward into utter darkness; and because Suliman was too busy shouting to think of warning them about the tricks of the place they all three took a header down a four-foot drop into the echoing home of blackness.

Narayan Singh proved heavy, for it is bone and thew that weigh, not fat. It took Catesby two minutes to recover breath, and then at last he struck a match. He held it high over his head, and the light showed all four walls of a cavern.

"Grim! Where are you?"

The cavern, with a row of sepulchers hewn into the walls, was empty. The echoes mocked them. Catesby struck match after match, and they peered together into every niche and cranny, finding nothing but a dollop of candle-grease to prove that any one had ever been in there.

Catesby burned his fingers with his last match, and the blackness of the womb of darkness shut them in again.

"Too late? Surely not too late?" muttered Narayan Singh.

Then Suliman lifted up his voice and yelled:

"He is gone! Oh, Jimgrim! Prince of men! That *iblis* has eaten him! Curse the *iblis!* Curse his religion and his mother and his eyes and his belly and his teeth! In the name of Allah, may his soul be flung into the fire that burns. May devils torture him forever. Oh, my Jimgrim! Oh-oh—ai-ee-ee!"

He flung himself face down and beat the floor of the cavern with his fists, sobbing his heart out for his vanished hero.

CHAPTER VI

"Thieves again!"

THE worst part of scheming for your own advancement is that sooner or later, and generally sooner, you are forced to employ paid assistance; and in the very nature of things such men as will assist are all self-seekers on their own account. The only safe ambition for even the cleverest men is on behalf of an ideal.

There are plenty of instances. Napoleon obsessed with the thought of lifting France out of the ruck of misery and restoring his country to her right place in the sun was invincible. Napoleon on a throne, scheming to make himself an ancestor of kings, was only dangerous. And Brigadier-General Jenkins was an immeasurable way behind Napoleon, without ever having possessed high ideals of any kind, although he could talk about them in a florid way that deceived some folk.

At about the time when Jim left camp on the trail of the *iblis* Jenkins was burning overtime oil in the wooden shack that did duty for office, with a corner of one window left uncovered in order that the world might appreciate his devotion to duty.

But he had given up sitting at the desk and rummaging through papers. Papers were the bane of his existence. Covering it under an air of lordly military scorn for trifles, he had been afflicted all his life with carelessness at odd moments, such as would account, for instance, for the R. T. O.'s confidence in washing his hands of the stolen TNT. Jenkins had received a memorandum about that explosive and mislaid it; now he had lost another paper, and this time there was no one else on whom he dared lay blame.

If it had been an official document he could certainly have pounced on his clerk, but unfortunately it was something about which it was to be hoped the clerk knew nothing. If the clerk did know, then the sooner that unfortunate should leave for far-off parts the better. The worst of it was that he was expecting a visit that evening from the man who had signed the paper, and he had reasons for needing it to flourish under that individual's nose.

He paced up and down the narrow office, casting huge shadows that made his mustache seem like a tea-pot handle and annoyed him, for he was vain of personal appearance as of everything else. Every now and then he paused to rap his forehead with a clenched fist, as if to shake into action that magnificent memory of which he boasted. Then the pacing was resumed, while his lower lip sucked at the corner of the red mustache to prevent the offending shadow.

* All right.

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One incident kept recurring to mind that he hoped explained the loss away, but he would have given a month's pay to be sure of it. He remembered a soiled, creased, dog-eared hundred-piaster note that had come in halves and had to be stuck together. He had sat at his desk—he remembered that distinctly—clipped a strip of paper with the shears, gummed the strip and joined the two halves of the note.

In all likelihood he had crumpled up the remainder of the piece of paper and thrown it into the box that did duty for waste-basket, but of that he could not be certain. It was possible that was the missing document. And he could not for the life of him remember to whom or for what purpose he had paid out the bank-note, repaired with a strip of paper that might have Arabic handwriting on it.

He might have paid a mess-bill with it, or settled a bridge account—although he very rarely lost at cards—in which case the note was probably long ago in circulation far enough away to be out of danger. That was to be hoped, but hope is often a fidgety weakling.

An incident nagged his memory. He had paid one hundred piasters on a recent occasion to the man who was coming to see him tonight—the very man under whose nose he wanted to brandish the lost signature.

As he turned for another worried beat up and down the room a Sikh sentry rapped on the door to announce his visitor. He went behind the desk and studied his appearance in the little canteen store looking-glass for a minute before answering, twisting his mustache straight and practising a couple of grimaces. He believed as thoroughly in advertisement as any manufacturer of patent pills, and never overlooked the cover of the capsule.

FOR an Arab the visitor seemed overconfident. He was a little man, dressed in expensive European clothes, but with a *tarboosh* at least a size too small for him, so that it sat jauntily on a head that grew very suddenly narrow above the ears; and like many little men he walked mincingly, suggesting an insect—but an insect with a sting, for his smile did not succeed in hiding malice. He was the sort of man one would instinctively keep at a distance. But his voice was like oil on troubled waters.

"I have nothing but good news for your honor," he began, smiling jubilantly. "I confess myself more than ever amazed at your genius that suggested this plan to organize Arab thieves and blame their thefts on the Zionists. It works! Never was such a thieving—tee-hee-hee! And a fair proportion of the plunder is already stowed in a place owned by the Zionist Committee—hee-hee!—such a joke!—isn't it exquisite?"

"Sit down. And listen to me, Charkas. How many times have I to tell you that I've nothing to do with your plans? I won't have you as much as suggest it, even in private. Do you understand me?"

Ibrahim Charkas folded one hand on the other, chose the edge of an uncomfortable chair and sat down facing him. The corners of his mouth looked meek, and his eyes immensely mischievous.

"I'm willing to help you Arabs, *sub rosa*, so to speak. And I'm willing that it should be known in the right quarter at the right time that I have been your friend all along. But nothing indiscreet—you understand me?"

"Certainly. Yes, indeed. And when the time comes you may rest assured we shall show ourselves most grateful—practically grateful."

"Um-m-m! By the way, Charkas, do you remember a hundred-piaster note I gave you the other day for expenses? There was a hundred, and I think four fifties and ten tens."

"Yes, indeed. You have been most generous. I was wondering tonight whether I might not ask——"

"D'you happen to have that hundred by you?"

"I have a hundred piasters——"

"I mean the original bank-note that I gave you."

"No, sir. Why?"

"I suspect it's a bad one. I'd like to give you another for it."

"Tee-hee-hee! You need not worry, general. It has been passed on long ago. Whoever has it now may do the worrying. Hee-hee! But I would like some more money for expenses."

"—— it! D'you take me for a millionaire?"

"No, sir. Indeed I know better. But these agitators all need wages, and if we are to work up a proper feeling against the

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Zionists there must be plenty of paid men at work."

"Haven't you Arabs any guts, that you can't raise a campaign fund among you?"

"Ah-h-h! We are mostly poor, and those who are not are inclined to keep out of trouble. My own little business in the *suk** is not profitable nowadays, because the soldiers buy all they require in the canteen at prices I can not meet. Now if I had a few hundred piasters tonight——"

"Sorry, Charkas; I've no cash by me."

"But a check, general? A check made out to bearer——"

"What do you take me for? How many times must I repeat that my name doesn't appear in connection with this business? Besides, I'm getting sick of it. It's time to bring things to a head. Major Grim has been sent down from Jerusalem to inquire into the thieving, and he's one of those persistent men who generally get what they're after. The way to make the most of that is to let him discover the loot as soon as possible in the hands of Zionists, and then advertise it here, in Egypt, and in England."

"Tee-hee-hee! Exquisite! As I said, a fair proportion of the loot is already——"

"I don't want to know where it is. Don't tell me. News reached me by mail this morning that the feeling at the Foreign Office is turning strongly against the Zionists at present. The fools have been demanding too much, with the result that pro-Arab sentiment is gaining ground. Much the same story comes from Egypt. Anything just now that puts the Zionists in a more unfavorable light would be opportune. You may depend on it, Major Grim will run that loot to ground in short order, so you'd better cover up your own tracks."

"Oh, my tracks are very well covered."

There was a suggestion of insolence underlying the certainty in the Arab's voice that made Jenkins turn suddenly and face him.

"How d'ye mean?"

"You are powerful. I look to you for protection in case of necessity. Otherwise——"

"Look here! Are you fooling yourself by any chance? Do you suppose I'd budge one inch to protect you? You people have no sense of proportion. To help the Arab cause—*sub rosa* as I said—is one thing; to ruin my whole career by becoming involved in your intrigues is another, and doesn't appeal to me at all. I'd let you hang rather than lift a finger."

HE GLARED at Charkas with dark eyes that had cowed many a subordinate and rescued him in many an awkward moment. He had made a deliberate study of that frown and the attitude that went with it, growing expert in their use but rather overestimating their value on the strength of occasional successes.

The Arab flinched like an animal under the lash. Jenkins turned his back on him. It was more from habit than intention that he strode behind the desk and faced the looking-glass.

Ibrahim Charkas was less cowed than he chose to seem, being one of those men who can keep their wits alert under a protecting mask of physical fear. The moment Jenkins' back was turned he leaned toward the desk and began searching the papers that lay scattered all over it in the confusion made by Jenkins himself half an hour previously. His fingers were as swift and supple as a card-sharper's, and his eyes, glancing every second at Jenkins' back, as wary as a rat's.

In less than thirty seconds he had spotted a railway notice of consignments due to arrive. Watching his chance, he flipped it toward his corner of the desk. A second more and he had it in his pocket. Then Jenkins turned on him.

"Give that back!"

"Give what back?"

"Don't try to argue. I watched you in the glass. Give it here. It's in that pocket. Out with it!"

With his head sunk between his shoulders, feet apart, ready to jump for his life, and his eyes looking like black shoe-buttons, the Arab laid the paper on the desk. Jenkins glanced at it.

"So-ho! So that's the way of it! Done it before half a dozen times no doubt! That's how they knew about the TNT, eh? You stole the memorandum off my desk. I remember now, you were in here that morning. What else have you taken?"

"Nothing else, sir."

"I mean on other occasions."

"Nothing. I am no thief. I did not take any memorandum. As for this, it was unintentional—mere nervousness—I did it without thinking—I——"

*Bazaar.

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"Oh, piffle! Sit where you are. Now—look up at me. You've been in here to my knowledge twice since the morning that TNT memorandum came.

"On the second occasion you followed up a letter you had written me. You said you had information too important to be put in writing. But you put a lot in that letter, didn't you? It was pretty compromising, wasn't it? And the additional information turned out to be so insignificant that I wondered why you bothered to come.

"I know now. I was looking for that letter tonight, and it's missing. It lay in this top drawer. You stole it back—now didn't you?"

Jenkins fairly yelled the last words at him and Charkas nearly shrank out of his skin.

"I did not! On my honor, I swear I did not!"

Jenkins reached for a whalebone riding-whip that hung from a nail on the wall.

"Admit it, you ——, or I'll thrash the life out of you."

To Jenkins' surprize, instead of capitulating and confessing the Arab grew suddenly calm.

"Why should I confess to what I did not do?" he answered. "It is you who should be ashamed, not I. If you have lost that letter you have betrayed me faithlessly, because any one who finds it can make use of it to ruin me. If that is so, I hope it will ruin you too.

"It was addressed to you. Your name was on it. If I am arrested I shall denounce you. You would better let me get away from here. Give me some money and I will go to Egypt."

Jenkins laughed. But he returned the whip to its nail on the wall, recovering his temper with an effort.

"I know what happened to the letter," he said. "I tore it up the other day. I was testing you. Seeing you take that paper just now in your—ah—fit of nervousness, I naturally jumped to conclusions and suspected you of other thefts. That's an old trick, you know, to startle a man into confessing something he did do by accusing him of doing something you know he didn't. You stood the test, Charkas.

"You'd better go now, though—it's inviting suspicion to be found talking with you in here so late at night. Don't forget—Major Grim is already on the job; so cover up your tracks, and be ready to accuse the Zionists. Good night."

"You gave me a severe shock to my nervous system, but—good night, sir."

JENKINS whistled the sentry and gave him orders to escort the Arab to the gate. Then he blew out the lamp, locked the door, and went to his own tent, where he sat for a few minutes humming to himself.

"So he stole that TNT memorandum, did he? I wonder if he took that letter too, or whether I destroyed it by accident. Um-m-m! So he thinks he can ruin me, does he? He's a mean little rat, and he might make trouble.

"Pity I accused Catesby, but that can't be helped now. I shall have to get Charkas on some other count—he's best out of the way. Um-m-m! Hullo, what's that!"

A rifle shot spat out through the darkness near at hand, and was followed by a deal of shouting.

"Thieves again!" yelled a subaltern's voice, and there was a rush of officers from the mess marquee to lend a hand in the hunt.

Jenkins buttoned up his tunic, buckled on his belt, and hurried after them to add to his laurels by being officious even if he reached the scene too late.

Those night raids take place swiftly, and when discovered the thieves don't wait to be surrounded. He arrived in time to receive the report from three subalterns, all speaking together breathlessly.

"Two of our Sikhs wounded, sir, but one of them swears he got home with his bayonet first. There's blood on the bayonet to prove it. The thieves got away with their dead man, and three rifles and some other stuff that they'd snaffled before they were seen. That's all, sir."

"Quite enough, too," snapped Jenkins. "It's a disgraceful business. I shall have an inquiry at once, and fix the blame. Perfectly disgraceful!"

He himself passed on the report to General Anthony, who came hurrying up a moment later, followed by his aide.

"I've been giving these rifle raids a lot of thought and close attention," he added in conclusion. "It's my belief that when the facts are out you'll find Zionists are at the bottom of it all."

Anthony looked hard at him in the light of a sentry's lantern.

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"Any one who could prove that would be entitled to great credit," he said slowly. "Have you seen that the wounded Sikhs have attention? No, never mind; I'll go myself."

CHAPTER VII

"I can deal with twenty-five as easily as one!"

IT WAS Jim's intention, once he had found the leper's rendezvous and got rid of the rather embarrassing company of Mahommed ben Hamza, to return for Catesby and Narayan Singh, or perhaps to send Suliman for them if the boy could be induced to go alone.

But there was something about the dark, open mouth of that tomb that fixed his attention for the moment. It did not differ particularly from a thousand others dotted here and there within a radius of a few miles; there was a sort of porch, perhaps a dozen feet deep, roughly hewn out of the hillside without any significant features; and down in a corner of that was a dark hole of not more than half a man's height, leading no doubt into a natural cave beyond.

But while he looked, wondering what attracted him, a distinct sound emerged from the hole. Noises in the night, propelled from a cave by the echoing walls, are not easy to recognize; but if it sounded like anything familiar it was a human hiccough.

Any of a number of creatures might have made the noise; owls, jackals, hyenas, badgers, rats—for those old tombs, once robbers have plundered them, make the handiest imaginable dens for wild beasts, provided their opening stands above the waterline, as this one did.

The business of being a hunter, whether of animals or men, produced two salient characteristics; a tendency to form opinion in advance as to what the hunted will most likely do, and an equally alert ability to throw preformed opinion to the winds at the first hint.

Jim had made up his mind that the leper would hardly risk waiting at the rendezvous, and for several reasons. In the first place the cave was almost certainly a trap, with only one opening. Whoever waited inside it could form no notion of what was passing outside, and would be at the mercy of superior numbers; men who had risked their lives to steal rifles might likely balk at surrendering the booty to one lone individual within the narrow compass of a grave.

To be mortally afraid of a dervish dancing like a devil on a hill was one thing; to fear him at all when face to face within four walls would be another. A man with the knowledge of Arab human nature that the leper had displayed would appreciate that certainly.

On the other hand, to wait at a little distance, watch for returning plunderers, perhaps even warn them sternly from an overlooking point of vantage, and come down to collect the booty after they had placed it in the cave and after making sure that the coast was clear, would be safe, circumspect and sane—cynical, in fact, in keeping with the cynicism that made use of the leprosy and religious emotion for unlawful ends.

Jim's first idea consequently was to wait at a point of vantage, too, and descend on the leper in turn and catch him red-handed whenever he should descend to possess the loot.

But there is no accounting for the recklessness of criminals, or the arrogance of men who think that fear gives them a hold over their accomplices. Cunning though he is, and careful though he is in a thousand ways, the charlatan who practises on superstition is once in a while more incautious than a sheep-fed wolf; like the wolf he takes outrageous chances after use has made the game seem simple.

Jim sat down in front of the tomb and listened, while Suliman clung to him in the hysteria of small-boy terror of bogies. For a long time the only movement was Suliman's trembling, and the only sound the footfall of some small night animal borne on an almost imperceptible breeze. But then the cough, or sneeze, or belch, or whatever it was, was repeated and Suliman hid his face in Jim's *abyi*,* shuddering as if he hoped to crawl out of his skin.

"Now," said Jim, "we decide whether or not you wear girl's clothes for a year. I'm going in there. Are you coming too?"

IT WAS an awful test of courage for a child of eight, with a shameful alternative. But Jim, whose own youth had been one long adventure with hardship and disadvantage, in which the only penalty he had learned to loathe was

*Long-sleeved Arab cloak.

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self-contempt, was no friend of compromise. Shameful alternatives were things he faced and turned his back on in New England at such an early age that decision had become a habit; and what a man has done repeatedly himself he finds it hard to believe another can not do. Hassan knew perfectly well from grim experience that Jim would be as good as his word.

"I am a man, not a woman. I will not wear girl's garments. Must I go in first?"

"No; I'll lead."

"Lead on then, Jimgrim."

"Good for you, youngster."

But Jim was minded to test him to the utmost.

"Seeing you're willing, you may stay outside if you like."

"No. I am a man. Lead on."

"All right. But listen; not a word to me in English. Hold your tongue—listen with all your might—and try to take your cue from me. Now are you ready?"

Jim produced a pocket electric torch and, stooping beside the black hole, flashed the light across the opening. Little by little, as nothing happened, he directed the light down into the hole, keeping himself out of the path of possible bullets. But it was a long passage and not straight, high enough inside for a man to stand without stooping and wide enough to carry in a body on a bier, but turning so abruptly after fifteen or twenty feet that there was nothing to be gained by peering in.

The fact that the flash-light had not scared out any animal was possibly presumptive proof that a man was in there who had scared the usual denizens to flight already; but in that case all that he had certainly done so far was to give the man notice of his coming.

So he crouched into the opening and stepped down and forward without further preliminary, flashing on the light again and trusting to its glare to spoil the aim of any man or beast disposed to murder. Suliman, forgetting the solace of the kukri, clung to the skirts of his *abyi* and followed breathlessly.

He took the turn in a hurry, for there is nothing to be gained by giving your enemy time to think until you have the weather gage of him so surely that thinking may induce him to surrender. But again nothing happened, and Suliman's teeth were chattering so loudly that Jim could not be sure whether or not he heard something moving in the darkness.

Immediately beyond the turn the passage sloped steeply into a natural cave, with a sheer drop at the end of three or four feet to the cave floor. Somebody might easily be crouching there, so he switched the light off suddenly and took the last lap with a run and a jump, leaving Suliman at the corner, scared out of his wits but grimly silent. The instant his feet touched the floor he faced about and turned on the light again, rather expecting to see the leper rise from beneath the opening and start to scramble out. But again nothing happened, except that Suliman took hold of courage with clenched teeth and came charging down after him, blinded by the torchlight in his eyes and pitching into the cave head foremost, unhurt by a miracle.

The tomb proved to be low, but long and wide—thirty feet at least each way, with a smooth floor showing traces of the chisel, although the roof was in its natural state. A swift examination of the walls by the torchlight showed deep recesses cut into the sides about four feet above the floor, each one doubtless in its day a separate sepulcher. Jim started to examine them one by one, commencing from the nearest to the entrance, and got no farther. His man was there—alive, alert, apparently amused.

Squatting in the mouth of a hole that once held human bones, like an Indian idol, except that most of the Indian gods lack humor, the leper smiled and said nothing, resting his chin in the hollow of one hand and his elbow on one knee, blinking at the light.

He looked abominably leprous. Whole patches of his skin from face to heels were glistening white and scaly. Yet his muscles seemed as firm as a horse's and as magnificently molded underneath the skin, while the expression on his face was not that of a man grown used to gnawing agony or the leprous local anesthesia. His eyes shone healthily in the torchlight, and except for the disgusting state of parts of his skin he looked more like an athlete in condition than a sick man.

FOR two minutes no one spoke. Then the leper reached behind him with his left hand, and Jim covered him instantly with his pistol.

But all that the groping hand brought

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forth was a candle-end and a match. The *iblis* set the candle-end on a ledge in the broken wall of the recess and lit it, never moving the rest of his body or shifting the position of his chin. So Jim put out the torch, to save the meager battery.

"Shoot him, Jimgrim," Suliman whispered unable to bear the tension any longer.

"*Sa'id, ya Jimgrim!*" boomed the *iblis*.

Having snatched Jim's name out of the silence at it were, he saw fit to speak. Moreover, having apparently only his sharp wits for a weapon, he proposed to take the upper hand by assuming the rôle of questioner.

"What manner of name is Jimgrim? What sort of Arab prowls by night with such a name for the *diba** to laugh at?"

The man's voice was pleasant, though his consonants were hard and vowels coarse. Being an Egyptian his opinion on the subject of Arab names was certain to be at fault as well as unimportant. The Arabs themselves gave Jimgrim his name. Jim answered instantly, mocking him in turn.

"Do the lepers of Egypt *all* smear on the sickness from a paint-pot?" he asked.

The *iblis* blinked steadily, still smiling, but saw fit not to answer.

"And smear so clumsily that the paint peels off at the edges here and there?" Jim asked again.

"What kind of cursed mother of impudence brought thee forth?" asked the *iblis*.

"One whose son can smell an Egyptian from half a mile away, and knows the look of paint, O father of unimportant questions," Jim replied.

"Come close. Touch me then, and count how many days until you too have leprosy!" sneered the *iblis*.

Suliman clutched at Jim to hold back, but Jim was no fledgeling to take a dare and step within reach of those bronze arms. The man's fingers looked strong enough to pull out an opponent's muscles as an ape pulls off a chicken's head, and the candlelight was in his favor.

"Shoot him, Jimgrim; shoot him!"

Suliman, with no affairs of state to complicate the issue, could imagine only that one remedy.

"Are you afraid to? Give me the pistol. I am not afraid."

The *iblis* answered that by putting out his tongue between his teeth, screwing his face into a hideous likeness of the prince of darkness, and hissing like an angry cat. Suliman screamed and jumped back against the far wall.

"Shoot, Jimgrim! If he spits and it hits you, you will die!"

The *iblis* took the hint and spat, wide of the mark on purpose, as a war-ship fires an "angry blank" across another's bows. Past master of bluff and opportunity, he was too wise to spit straight and prove his ammunition harmless. It obviously disconcerted him that Jim stood still.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"Nothing more than I can have," Jim answered.

"Fool!" sneered the *iblis*. "He who wants no more than that is like the rat that craves a bellyful. Get out of here. *Ruh min hene!*"

"Not until I have what I can have."

"What is it then?"

"Partnership."

"Thou—dog of an Arab—son of a mother of abominations—spat-upon offspring of sixty dogs —— fuel for the fire of Eblis—partnership with me?"

"Aye, with you, father of impotent curses."

The *iblis* laughed cynically.

"What should a friend of the Prophet share with such a dog as you, and why?"

"I will show you what to share," said Jim, "when the thieves bring the loot before dawn. And, as to why, do you see this pistol? Moreover, I have armed friends within whistle."

The *iblis* laughed again.

"Shoot!" he jeered. "No bullet can harm me."

And whether the man really believed that or not Jim was at a loss to know. A deal of fanatical self-confidence goes to the attainment of such dancing and deviltry as his.

"The bark of the pistol will bring my friends in any case," said Jim.

"The bark of a jackal summons the pack to eat carrion," the *iblis* answered; "but one roar of a lion sends them scurrying."

JIM pointed the pistol straight at him, and met his eye along the blued steel barrel. The *iblis* did not flinch, and Jim felt in rather a predicament. He, too, was bluffing, for he had not the slighest intention of killing the man—even in self-defense if he could help it.

Dead the rascal would be useless. Alive

*Hyenas.

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there was the possibility of making him uncover all the ramifications of his plans. If Jim managed to call Catesby and Narayan Singh they could easily capture the man between the three of them. By gagging him and waiting near the cave they might even secure a few of the thieves when they came to deliver loot.

But Jim knew better than to suppose that this imitation leper was without influential backing, and he wanted the "men higher up." One or two words that Jenkins dropped had convinced him that the brigadier was making use of that most tempting of all tools to the unscrupulous ambitious man—the criminal network of the underworld, and he did not propose to play into Jenkins' hands by destroying the evidence too soon.

He suspected that nothing would suit the brigadier's purpose better at the moment than to have this particular tool safely under lock and key. The *iblis* had served his purpose by producing a condition, out of which Jenkins proposed to get credit by destroying it and then attributing the blame to his superiors, adopting the U.S. brand of cheap city politics transported to another sphere, without quite all the subtlety or half the brains.

"Better shoot soon," grinned the *iblis*, probably mistaking Jim's deliberation for superstitious funk.

Jim lowered the pistol. He decided to summon his two friends by other means.

"Suliman," he said, "come here a minute."

But Suliman had had enough of it and had vanished, creeping like a ghost among the shadows. A moment later he heard the boy scramble out of the passage into the entrance and take to his heels.

"The child is wiser than the man," the *iblis* grinned maliciously.

Jim went to the entrance and leaned with his back against the opening, cutting off the one way of retreat and hoping that the *iblis* might not force the issue by attacking him. For he was fully resolved not to shoot if that could be avoided by any means; and strong though he knew himself to be he suspected that the *iblis* had twice his strength.

More depended on Suliman in the next few minutes than he cared to dwell on, and he went through the alternating cold chills and hot sweat that always attacked him when success or failure depended for the moment on some one else. It was Jim's besetting weakness that he could not rest easily unless the key to a given crisis were in his own hand, and he suffered more in such minutes than a victim on the rack.

There were so many possibilities. Suliman might even be killed by a leopard. A hyena might overcome natural cowardice sufficiently to attack a boy of that size. Or he might lose his way.

Catesby and Narayan Singh might have grown impatient and have tried to follow, in which case Suliman might fail to find them. Perhaps they were already scouting in the wrong direction. Or lurking thieves might make away with the boy. If the camp-thieves should return and catch him there alone with the *iblis*, he would be in a fine predicament.

And all the while the *iblis* sat quite still, blinking beside the candle in what, if not amusement, was a most astounding bluff at it. Insolently naked, impudently confident, he seemed aware of hidden resources of which Jim knew nothing.

He was certainly an unusual malefactor. Nine criminals out of ten caught in a corner and held at pistol-point would have at least pretended to consider that partnership proposal, if only with a view to subsequent treachery. In fact, all that redeemed the proposal itself from treachery was certainty that the *iblis* would never dream of playing fair. Jim might have gained an insight into the inner workings of the scheme while the other sought to gain time, that was all.

"When your friends come they will be as impotent as you are," said the *iblis* after a few minutes.

His tone of voice was that of an agent of the Inquisition discussing the next item on the program for a victim's benefit.

It was tempting to answer threat with threat, but that is a poor game. Threats are always launched either to unmask the other's batteries or else to undermine self-command and blind an opponent to his wisest course. There is no exception to that rule, even though threateners don't always analyze it and the threatened seldom do.

Feeling like a bear that has treed his man, Jim waited in expectant silence, little guessing, in spite of all his hard-won understanding of Eastern human nature, what a consummate player of surprize hands he had to deal with.

"Allah makes all things easy. I can deal

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with three or four of you as easily as one," remarked the *iblis* after a long silence.

Jim did not answer.

"I can deal with twenty-five as easily as one."

"Why not deal with one first, while you have the chance?" laughed Jim.

For answer to that the *iblis* pressed out the candle with his thumb and threw the cave into instant, utter blackness. He did not make a sound, but by the time Jim could get the flashlight from his pocket and press the button there was not a sign of him anywhere. He had vanished as completely as the darkness did under the electric glare.

JIM gripped his pistol and flashed the light all over the cave, turning the rays into the other recesses one by one. As far as he could see from where he stood they all seemed empty, but he did not dare leave his place by the entrance to look more carefully because that would have given the *iblis* a chance to bolt. If there was a passage leading through one of the recesses into another cave he could afford to wait and look for that after the arrival of Catesby and Narayan Singh, because however many their ramifications, those ancient tombs of Palestine never have more than one small opening to the world outside.

He kept the light turned steadily on the floor in front of him to guard against surprize, and presently he knew why the *iblis* had chosen just that moment for disappearance. Jim's owns ears are exceptionally sharp, but the other's must have been sharper. He could hear approaching footsteps now. Catesby and Narayan Singh were coming.

He did not dare look around to greet them. From somewhere in the coal-black shadow of one of the recesses the *iblis* began barking like a jackal. Most fanatics use some form or other of animal noise to goad themselves into action. He kept his eyes alert in front of him and, since he did not choose to betray his nationality to the *iblis* yet, called aloud to his friends in Arabic.

"*Ta'ala, islab; ma fi darar!* (Come on, you fellows; there's nothing the matter!)"

The *iblis* barked again, and footsteps in the winding tunnel behind him doubled their speed. He set his back more squarely against the opening, for if the *iblis* proposed to make a rush for liberty now was his last chance; or his active muscle might count on surprize and speed to upset men groping through a narrow passage with the light behind them.

The *iblis* changed his bark into a yell. Jim stiffened himself for action. Less than a second later a hand reached forward from behind him and seized his throat in a grip there was no breaking. He tried to fire backward over his shoulder, but another hand seized his wrist and nearly broke it, wrenching the pistol free.

Then two men jumped on him, and when the steely fingers on his throat had squeezed him half-unconscious they bound both wrists behind him with a leather thong and threw him face downward on the floor. There he lay still, making no effort yet to look about him, concentrating all his faculties on regaining breath and recovering from the physical pain. He was stunned, hurt, and ashamed of himself for being taken by surprize; and as soon as he could breathe without agony he battled down and beat the unmanning suggestions of self-accusation that have put many more stout men out of business than ever surprize or defeat did.

"Shall we cut his throat?" inquired a gruff voice casually.

There was no immediate answer. Jim lay with the gooseflesh rising and receding on his back in tidal waves, while an Arab whom he could not see stood across him with a foot on either side, ready at a nod to do the butcher work.

Some one lighted the candle-end. Another some one blew it out. There began to be whispering over in a corner. Other men came in through the tunnel and threw heavy objects on the floor, one or two of which rattled with the sound of rifle swivels.

It seemed that there was quite an argument going on, although Jim could not distinguish the voice of the *iblis*. They hissed over in the corner like a lot of snakes, once and again a low growl breaking out by way of emphasis. The man who stood athwart Jim's ribs grew restless and struck a long knife on the palm of his hand.

"Oh, let's cut his throat and be done with it," he grumbled, stooping to fumble for Jim's forehead and bend his head back for the sacrifice.

To have started to struggle at that moment would have made death certain; the Arab would have taken the decision on himself. But it was nervous work to lie still with throat bent convex, taut and ready.

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One other thought monopolized Jim's brain at that minute. Knife or no knife, he was ready to let out a yell of warning if he could catch sound of his friends' footsteps in time. If he died for it the next second, he must save them from advancing into the trap, and he listened desperately.

He thought it was all up when the whole gang began to cross the floor toward him. Then he put up the best fight possible, which wasn't much in the circumstances. Just before the first man reached him he rose to his knees with a jerk and tossed the would-be executioner over his head.

The man who had annexed his flashlight discovered how to turn it on, but held it sidewise, and nine men stood revealed, all eyes turned on the new toy. Jim charged the nearest of them head forward and butted him in the belly, sending him sprawling. But the rest fell on him, tripped him up, beat him and pulled a bag over his head.

They bound a cloth tightly over his mouth outside the bag, and a moment later he was being hustled out of the cave, pricked on from behind by the knife-point of the wrathful one who had been butted.

"By Allah!" growled an angry voice behind him. "There shall be a high price exacted for that ram's pleasantry! By morning you shall wish *Um Kulsum* had never brought you forth."*

CHAPTER VIII

"Allah makes all things easy!"

JIM had not the least idea where they were taking him. His trained sense of direction was checkmated by a simple precaution that they took outside the cave, pushing him from one to the other and spinning him in a sort of savage blindman's buff. To end that ignominy he lay down at last, whereat they kicked and dragged him up again and hurried on their way.

It was all he could do to breathe through the combination of gag and gunny-bag. That effort and the pain in his wrist kept his normally keen intuition in abeyance; but he did experience the sensation of passing between high walls, and suspected accordingly that their course lay south, along the *wady* through which he had reached the tomb.

He could not tell whether the *iblis* was with them or not. The very few words that passed were in a low whisper. But by the jingle of metal on metal he knew that some of his captors were carrying looted rifles; and once they stopped to gather up something heavy that several of them carried along afterward in turns between them. Whatever that load might be, they drove away jackals from it before stopping to pick it up.

Supposing that his surmise was correct that they were hurrying down the *wady*, then he was sure that they turned nearly due west at the end of it; but after that the windings of the course were altogether too mazy to remember. He had begun by counting his steps from the point where they left off hazing him, but realized the uselessness of that after the eighth or ninth turn.

Strangely enough, in spite of the gag and the pain in his wrist he felt fairly cheerful. If they had proposed to kill him, he argued, they would have done it in the tomb; and it was his natural New England-born conviction that no set of circumstances are irretrievable until so proven. He even saw humor in the situation, now that he was sure that Catesby and Narayan Singh would not rush headlong into ambush.

He could not smile or even chuckle under the smothering gag; but mirth does not really need expression, as the red man knew, who regarded laughter as womanly weakness. The imaginary picture of Suliman's rage on finding the cave empty—of Catesby's better bread chagrin—and of Narayan Singh's grim, muttered vengefulness gave him the full feeling of laughter without its compromising form.

Even in that predicament he did not think with any approval of the prospect of swift death for the *iblis*. He wanted facts first; after those let come what might.

Jim has altogether peculiar qualities that some consider cold-blooded; it never gave him the slightest twinge of satisfaction to see a criminal land in jail at the end of a long battle between wits, nor yet to see a murderer hung. What interested him at the moment—and so deeply that he would rather die than fail to unearth the lowest root of it—was the scheme behind the criminal. He had a sort of sporting admiration for the man himself, provided only he was game, much as a real hunter has a friendly feeling for the animal that does its fighting utmost.

* *Um Kulsum* was an utterly unrighteous harridan of Arab legend, who out-wantoned Jezebel of Bible fame.

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Nevertheless it amused him to imagine the *iblis* fool enough to wait there in the tomb and be discovered by Narayan Singh. Narayan Singh knew no such nice distinctions; his was the direct, unwavering desire to get his man, with death as the only logical and satisfying finish to a criminal career.

The *iblis* would likely learn quite a lot about physical pain if he should fall into the Sikh's hands and refuse to give information; with his own wrist aching like a tooth that thought did not exactly make Jim worry.

Unless you kill outright a man who can amuse himself in that way, thinking of other things in spite of his predicament while captors hurry him helpless toward an unimaginable fate, you never can have the best of him. For he is not mesmerized by circumstance. Fear gets no chance to do its paralyzing work. Though the fact seems exactly the reverse, the odds are really in his favor.

Jim's captors were obsessed by the knowledge that they had a prisoner who must be disposed of in some way; and the longer they put him off the less simple and convenient the solution was going to seem. Jim, on the other hand, was thinking of anything except that prospect, so that when the next development was staged he faced it quite unconvinced of desperation.

Most captors imagine they have imprisoned a man's wits when they have tied his hands, and many prisoners believe it too; but the wise man when he is bound thinks of "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" until his moment comes. Jim began to consider the probable past history of that cavernous tomb he had left, while they hustled him through the darkness and worried one another with hoarse whisperings.

THEY crossed the railway at last, for he tripped twice on the metals, which meant that they had turned from west or thereabouts to very nearly due east. Ten minutes' hurry after that brought them to some sort of stone building, where they let him lean against the wall while one of the party wrestled with a rusty lock and key.

He tried to work his hands loose by rubbing the thong against the stonework, but made small progress because of the pain in his wrist, and only succeeded in working off his scarab ring.

The door swung open at last on creaking hinges. Two men took him by the shoulders and thrust him forward. He tripped on a stone sill, and they jeered as he landed face downward on a rough stone floor. A second later the door slammed shut behind him and he heard the scream of the complaining key.

He lay still and listened for several minutes to discover whether he was alone or not. Hearing nothing, he scrambled to his feet and, backing until he reached the wall, began to feel his way along it, hunting some projection against which he might chafe the leather thong. The room he was in was circular, which set him thinking.

Part way around the circuit he felt stone steps, and a rusty iron rod supporting a hand-rail. There are better tools than that for cutting rawhide, but the rawhide was eating into his wrists, and necessity sharpens patience.

First against the edge of a stone step, then against the rusty iron, then against the step again, he chafed and sawed, injuring his own skin almost as often as the leather, and without any means of measuring progress. During a pause while he strained at the thong to test it he heard a sound that seemed familiar.

In a flash his thought went back to the entrance of the tomb and the dry, peculiar noise that had induced him to enter. It sounded like the same cough or belch or whatever it was. Yet he could hear no breathing.

He changed the order of proceedings then and knelt, working his face up and down against the step to get the gag off, and succeeded after several minutes in forcing it down over his chin, where it hung loose. But it was not so simple to get the bag off his head. He managed that finally by bending his head downward and shaking it until the blood surged up behind his eyes and the universe seemed like a sea of fire with purple stars in it.

It was a minute after he had got rid of the sack before he could see at all, although the circular room in which he found himself was not absolutely dark. Faint moonlight filtered through a small iron-barred window set twelve feet above the floor, and dimly illumined the bare walls.

He stared about him for another minute before his eyes recovered sufficiently to make out a shadowy shape beneath the window. Little by little, as he grew

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accustomed to the dim light, he made out the outline of a man, who sat so still as to seem dead, although it was an uncommon posture for a dead man, squatting Moslem-fashion, elbow on knee. He was about to approach to investigate when the man moved, and then he recognized the *iblis*.

The movement was in character. He had been sitting shrouded in a brown cloak, but threw it back now from his shoulders and sat naked, eying Jim with scornful curiosity, much as he might have watched the antics of a beetle on a pin. Jim set his back against the steps and resumed his labor at the thong, pressing hard and rubbing with as little noise as possible.

"I can deal with you with your hands free," said the *iblis* after a minute or two.

"Try it," Jim suggested, and threw caution to the winds.

Pretending to chafe more violently at the thong, measuring the distance with his eye meanwhile, he went for the *iblis* with a sudden run and jump, intending to land feet foremost on him. But without any obvious muscular effort the *iblis* shifted his position just as suddenly half a yard to the right, and Jim's feet hit the wall.

He made a prodigious effort to recover balance and jump again, but fell on his back, and having lost his Arab headdress when he shook the bag free, contact with the stone floor nearly stunned him. So he lay still, and the *iblis* leaned down to peer into his face, with that unchanging, curiously scornful smile that was half-sneer, half-amusement.

"I can deal with three—or thirty—or three hundred of you."

Jim did not answer. With his hands free, half-stunned or not, he would have taken his chance in a free-for-all fight, though the *iblis* was as strong as two of him; but to tempt providence in his present position would have been sheer lunacy. He was constitutionally unable to believe himself down and out as long as consciousness remained, so he lay and wondered whence his opportunity would come and what form it would take.

THE *iblis* provided it. He was evidently of an economical turn of mind, for he produced from a pocket in the discarded cloak the self-same stub of candle that had served his purpose in the tomb, and lit it. Jim set his teeth, thinking at first that torture was to be the next item on the program; for in the fingers of an expert a lighted candle can do as much mischief as a red-hot iron. But the *iblis* only looked about for a place to set the light on, and leaned over finally to drip wax on the floor and stick it there out of reach.

So Jim scrambled to his feet again. The *iblis* looked up at him and laughed.

"See what is up-stairs," he suggested.

"Untie my wrists!" said Jim.

The *iblis* did it, not troubling to get to his feet but turning Jim about and unknotting the thong with fingers that were strong enough to have unraveled wire. Standing, chafing his wrists to restore circulation and get some of the pain out of the swollen one, Jim realized how utterly helpless he would be if he tried to fight. It was true that he had boots on and could kick, but unless you are very certain of your aim, and equally sure of surprizing your adversary, one blow wins no battle.

So he decided to try the stairs and see. But the *iblis* sprang across the room in front of him and prevented him by sitting on the bottom step.

"Not now," he grinned.

"Why the change of mind?"

"Go back to the wall and sit down."

Jim went back and leaned against the wall, holding his hot wrist against the cool stone, grateful for any way of gaining time, for time was obviously in his favor. For one thing, Catesby would probably report him missing; and Narayan Singh would certainly not rest until he had found him dead or alive.

If he could only guess what the *iblis*' purpose was in bringing him to that place he would have a great deal more than time in his favor, for the man with definite plans and a nefarious purpose is always at a disadvantage as compared to an equally determined man aware of both plan and purpose and bent on spoiling both.

He felt his way along the wall to the door and tested the lock while he weighed the situation in his mind. The lock was set into an immensely heavy wooden door and was unbreakable without tools; but a little enlightenment dawned as he watched the *iblis*, who sat smiling at his futile effort to escape.

Up-stairs there was probably loot—most likely rifles. That would account for the *iblis* being willing for him to go up there

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with his hands tied, and unwilling otherwise. Supposing that only five per cent. of the loot stolen from the British camp in the last month or two was up there, the *iblis* certainly could not carry it away alone, and probably would not dare leave it where it was much longer. Therefore it was likely that he was waiting for men, who would come before morning to remove the stuff; nobody would be fool enough to run that risk after daybreak.

Jim's spirits began to rise. If his guess was correct, then he was on the trail of something vastly more important than the mere thieves. The ultimate receivers of the loot were worth all risks to bring to book. Certainly the *iblis* could be nothing more than a mere agent, because a naked dervish trying to dispose of rifles for any purpose or in any market would fall foul of the law within an hour, even if he tried to employ agents on his own account. There was somebody higher up—not a doubt of it.

It began to seem wisest to play the other fellow's game and wait patiently, if only because that might force the *iblis* to move next and show something of his hand. He might be a lunatic like many another pseudo-religious sensation-maker; but it was much more likely that he was a very shrewd expert in human nature, busily applying all the simple principles he knew, after the fashion of a drill-sergeant, or a jailer, or a trainer of wild beasts. His strength was circumstantial and physical; all the conditions were in his favor, as much as if he had deliberately decoyed his prisoner to chosen ground. His weak points were two—vanity and time.

So Jim sat down. And curiosity took hold of him so completely as to obliterate the pain in his wrists along with all sense of his own danger. Satisfied that the *iblis* had a definite objective and a motive behind every move, he cared for nothing but to discover what they were.

The same spirit that had made him study Arabic until he knew the language better than most Arabs did, gripped him in the same way that the laboratory scientist is seized. It would have annoyed him at that moment to be discovered by his friends and rescued.

"Don't forget; his two weak points are time and vanity!"

That thought was like a formula running through the mind of a chemist bending over his retorts.

EVEN vanity was not strong enough to blind the *iblis* to the element of time, although it made him so sure of his own perceptive faculty that he never suspected his prisoner might be other than a local Arab. It was evidently no part of his plan to waste time letting the sense of mystery grow thin.

"Allah makes all things easy," he announced again. "I can tell your father's name and your mother's, and the name of the village you came from."

If Jim's curiosity had been of a non-scientific turn he would have dared the man to do it; and the *iblis* no doubt would have side-stepped by refusing to commit himself. He would not have been one step nearer to discovery.

"Vanity and time—vanity and time—those are his weak points!"

Time could look after itself, for the minutes go by changeless measure. Jim decided to tickle vanity, which is usually dangerous until well fed.

"That is indeed a great gift," he said respectfully. "I remember that you called me by my right name in the tomb tonight. To be able to tell a man's name, and those of his father and mother, and his village—that is wonderful!"

"Allah makes all things easy," smiled the *iblis* self-complacently. "I not only have gifts, I confer them. I not only have power, I can pass it on to others."

There was something vaguely familiar about that statement. Jim had heard it, not exactly in those words, but near enough, in a back room in Boston where an occultist held forth; and again in New York City in a barroom where a political gang-leader held brief sway. Only this man, being half-savage and believing he dealt with another like himself, made his boasts a little bit more definite. Possibly, like the politician and the occultist, he half believed his own assertions.

"How does a man attain such gifts?" Jim asked him.

"It is all in the Koran," said the *iblis*. "Allah makes all things easy."

"They say that all knowledge is written in the Koran," Jim answered. "But who shall understand it?"

"Ah!"

The *iblis* chuckled from the depths of his immense conceit.

"There is no profit in ignorance. But

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there is wisdom in obeying those who understand."

"And you understand? Shall I obey you?"

"You *must* obey me. I could kill you here—now—with these fingers."

That was probably perfectly true. Jim did not choose to dispute it; he would have had as much chance against a gorilla.

"I could let you go and cause you to drop dead within fifty paces," continued the *iblis*. "I, who know your name, and the name of your father and mother, and your birthplace, can curse them all and——"

"No, no!" Jim protested. It was just as easy to pretend terror as to laugh. "Don't do that! In the name of Allah, Lord of Creatures, don't do that!"

"Then obey me."

"I must. What else can I do? You have made me afraid," said Jim, wondering just how many superstitious potential thieves had been initiated in that room.

"If you disobey in one thing you shall turn to worms—in one day—in two days—in three days—according to the measure of disobedience."

That was clever. Every victim was sure to disobey in some particular, but delay in fulfilment of the overhanging threat could only be held to qualify the disobedience, and the fear would remain.

"For disobedience you shall turn to worms. Your roof shall fall in. Your relatives shall die of want."

"But what if I obey?" Jim asked him.

"Ah!"

The *iblis* chuckled again, as if reviewing in his mind the wondrous list of prizes.

"Those who are obedient have protection. Provided with protection they may help themselves. Allah makes all things easy!"

"Why do you pretend to be a leper?" Jim asked suddenly and at that the *iblis* flew into such a rage that every muscle in his huge frame trembled.

His eyes blazed. His lips, thrust outward like an ape's, uncovered yellow teeth that could have crushed a forearm. Fingers strong enough to pluck out a victim's sinews one by one twitched with desire, and his long toes kept time with them. Suddenly he spat, writhing up his face into hideous contortions, and hissing as he had done in the cave.

"Cursed dog of an unbelieving fool!" he snarled. "Son of sixty dogs and a cess-pool! Impudent, insolent, abominable lump of earth about to perish! Bloodless, loveless, senseless, hopeless *pig!* Eater of worms and dung! Idiot!"

Foam bubbled through his teeth and ran down on his chin in slime. It was not difficult to seem afraid of him.

"Come and touch me! Come and see how soon I can make you a leper!"

Not to obey, of course, was disobedience. On the other hand, to obey would be to call the bluff, which might oblige the *iblis* to take some unimaginably desperate course. There was no guessing what tricks he had in store, so Jim played safe.

"No, no!" he begged. "In the name of Allah the compassionate, not that!"

"I can make *abras** whom I will!"

THAT was Jim's cue to do a little sensational acting. Plainly the purpose was to make him thoroughly afraid, so to get at the motive behind the purpose he would have to seem afraid; and he set to work to do that. Most of Jim's successes had been won by keeping his head in emergencies; he had not much experience of the outward effects of terror on himself. He had to risk overacting the part, putting in practise all he could remember of the symptoms of Arab panic.

His teeth stubbornly refused to chatter, and he could not make the cold sweat come; but he could slobber and mutter Koran texts and beg for mercy, throwing himself forward to beat on the floor with the palms of his hands and call the *iblis* such names as "prince of wizards—lord of potent curses—father of terrors and captain of calamities," names which pleased the *iblis* very much indeed.

After that he flew into a panic, making believe he thought the *iblis* would rush at him. He scrambled to his feet and hugged the wall like an animal trying to escape, then beat on the door with his fists, and finally came to a stand with open mouth and glaring eyes as if hope were gone and he could only await the inevitable.

The *iblis* appeared to consider himself a judge of such symptoms, and was not quite satisfied yet. He, too, seemed to await the inevitable, as if fear always ran an appointed course and he preferred to see the thing complete.

Jim, aping abject terror, stood and wondered what the —— the man expected more.

*Leprous.

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What should an Arab in fear of witchcraft do in proof of utter lack of self-control? He had it! He sprang at the candle and stamped out the light with his foot, screaming instantly in added terror of darkness and scrambling around the wall to the door again to beat on it and shout for help.

At last the *iblis* appeared satisfied. It was time to turn the last trick.

"Allah makes all things easy. I can find you in the dark!" he boomed.

In answer Jim groaned and muttered enough to satisfy the very hellions who stoke the fires of Eblis.

"I can make you *abras* without touching you!"

"Oh no, no, no! *Shi mamkut! Mnain hashshakawi!* (That is abominable! How could you be so wicked!)"

"Or I can spare you if I will."

"Spare me then, father of afflictions!"

"Or I can spare you for a little while, and reach you with my curses at a distance if you disobey me."

"—— him, I wish he'd hurry up," thought Jim. "I'm getting tired of this."

But he managed to keep up a pretty good semblance of terror; and either the *iblis* was getting tired, too, or else time began to press.

"Be still. I will spare for the present."

"*Ilham'dillah!*" (God be praised!)

Jim collapsed into a squatting posture on the floor, moving his head this and that way to try and see the other in the dark; but the *iblis'* black skin made that impossible. Apparently, however, the *iblis* could see Jim and guessed his purpose.

"I can be invisible whenever I choose."

"O father of darkness, what do you want with me?"

"Ah! What do I want with you? What but to make of you a wizard like myself. I recognize the spirit of obedience, but there must be a test."

"Father of terrors, I have been too much tested!"

"*Malaish.*" (No matter). There is another. Fail in this and you shall see the leprosy seize you in an hour."

Having exhausted all the outward forms of fear he could think of, Jim sat still.

"My servants will come presently," said the *iblis*. "They are not such as you, fit to become wizards, but servants—mean men—dogs. They will take things away from here to another place. Go with them, but say nothing to them. Answer no questions. Watch where they put the things. Then return and bring word of it to me."

"I obey, father of happenings," Jim answered meekly.

It was almost the hardest thing he ever did to keep a note of triumph from his voice that minute.

"Speak one word to them—answer one question—and the curse shall rot the carcasses of you and yours!"

"I am silent—silent!"

"Then *be* silent!"

For another half hour Jim and the *iblis* faced each other in darkness, Jim on the floor with his back against the wall and the *iblis* on the bottom step. What with headache, hunger, pain in his wrist and general weariness Jim almost fell asleep; but just as the first false light before dawn brightened the narrow window there came a stealthy, subdued knocking on the door that brought the *iblis* to his feet. He crossed the room, put on his brown cloak, produced an enormous key, went to listen at the door, and after a backward, precautionary glance in Jim's direction opened it.

CHAPTER IX

"The butcha *speaks wisdom."*

CATESBY and Narayan Singh had no more matches; and Suliman had none, for they searched him. They tried to fathom the cave's recesses in the dark, but gave that up as hopeless; even the Sikh's eyes could not penetrate the Stygian darkness that began where the faintly reflected starlight ceased, a yard or two from the entrance hole.

So they climbed out, and with Suliman disconsolate on Narayan Singh's knees held a consultation. Catesby, of course, began it.

"Which shall we do? Return to camp and report Major Grim missing, or hunt about and try to find him?"

But Suliman spoke next, being only a stickler for etiquet when he could score by it.

"I will not go back to camp! If that *iblis* has eaten Jimgrim, then Narayan Singh must kill the *iblis* and cut his belly open and let Jimgrim out."

Catesby laughed, but Narayan Singh knew better. It is not only the children in that land who believe the goblin stories.

"If we go back to camp without him, *sahib*, half the camp will call us liars and the

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other half will believe henceforward all the tales about the *iblis*, and twice as many more tales of their own invention. Moreover, my orders are to bring that Jimgrim back to Jerusalem alive."

"But where to look?" wondered Catesby. There was cactus-covered sandy hill and dale in every direction. They might chance on footprints, but likely enough it would be easier and quicker work to follow rumor through Jerusalem city than such a trail by moonlight.

"Let us ask the *butcha*," said Narayan Singh, preferring to be charged with talking nonsense rather than seem to rebuke an officer.

Etiquet in his case was something only to be broken in a pinch.

Catesby produced a cigaret, and swore, remembering he had no matches. Narayan Singh, with mutiny in mind if Catesby should insist on going back to camp, proceeded after a fashion of his own to draft a proposition.

"Now Suliman-jee, son of the warrior Rustum, how much have you learned from Jimgrim?"

"Everything."

"That is a very great deal. Tell me some of it. Where would thieves sell loot, for instance?"

"In the *suk*."*

"That might be. But if they feared to go into the *suk*, what then?"

"They might run away over the hills to Hebron."

"In that case we can not follow them tonight. But if they were going to the *suk*, would they go by night?"

"No."

"Why not, father of ready answers?"

"They would be shot. None but thieves enter a town by night."

"And if they had loot with them, would they wait to be caught with it?"

"They would bury it, or hide it somewhere."

"And then—what then?"

"One or two would go into the town at daybreak. Later a cart would come, or a camel, or an ox; and the loot would be taken to the *suk* by daylight, covered up. That is how all the thieves behave."

"Father of good scouting! And would they hide the loot on this side of the railway track, or beyond?"

"That is a foolish question. If they hid it on this side, whoever came afterward to fetch it would have to carry it across the track by daylight, and the track is always watched."

"True, father of knavery! Whereas, between the track and the town——?"

"Who would search a cart or a camel between the town and the railway line? The cart leaves town and returns; that is nothing. It is carts and camels crossing the track that are always searched."

"True. True. At night thieves could cross the track unseen——"

"Easily."

"But they could not enter the town unseen. That is so. And if we should watch the open land between the railway and the town at daybreak, we might learn something. Do you hear him, *sahib?* The *butcha* speaks wisdom"

Catesby yawned, and then laughed.

"All right, Narayan Singh. I see your mind's set on not going back to camp. Suits me. Better a night in the open than a lame tale for General Jenkins! Besides, I like your kind of guts. Come on, we'll head for the railway line."

THE Sikh carried Suliman, who promptly fell asleep with his head hanging downward over the stalwart shoulder like a dead sheep's, swinging in time to the stride.

"That kid's a nuisance," Catesby commented. "However, I suppose he can't be expected to wake up and walk in this sand, and we can't leave him. I'll carry him turn about with you."

"Nay, *sahib*, it is nothing. Let him sleep. In the morning when he wakes he may serve a purpose."

But full rations ever since Jim had rescued him from starving in the Jaffa Gate had filled out the boy's stocky frame, and it was no easy matter to carry him for mile after mile across that loose desert land. Even when they came to cultivation the going was still heavy, and Catesby took his turn, wondering after five minutes of it at the Sikh's endurance.

They had to put the boy down, and wake him, and make him walk when they neared the railway because, being in Arab costume, they were certain to be fired at unless they took cover and watched their chance. Finally, after slinking for half an hour

* Bazaar.

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among long shadows, they crawled through a culvert and emerged on the far side without being challenged, although two Gurkas on patrol passed within ten yards of where they hid.

Within three hundred paces of them, then, was a cluster of ruined buildings, shot to pieces in the war and never since rebuilt, but patched here and there as if some one had tried to make them habitable. In the moonlight they looked like a medieval castle with its upper story gone, for part of what might have been the keep reared jagged and broken above the rest.

"What is that place, *sahib?*" asked Narayan Singh.

"Nothing much. It used to be an Arab village with a mosque in the middle. Our guns shelled it, and most of it was burned. That tower you see is all that's left of the minaret. Nobody uses the place now."

"Hah!"

The Sikh's one monosyllable suggested a world of reservations rather than assent.

"The place'll be full of lice and bedbugs," Catesby warned.

"Aye, and these days of peace have made us fat, *sahib*. They will have good feasting! The top of that broken tower is the place from which to watch."

"Come on, then. Let's get bitten."

But it was not easy to reach the buildings without risking being seen by sentries on patrol, and they had to crawl under cover of a ridge of sandy earth that held more thorns and insects to the square yard than a brush has bristles. Then a pariah dog smelled them out and yelped to the pack, and for five minutes they were the center of abominable noise.

They did not dare shoot, any more than the curs dared come close enough to be killed with a stick. Throwing lumps of dirt and sticks only increased the yelping; and there weren't any stones. But finally another pariah yelped in the distance and the pack raced off to fight him for his find.

After that it was an easy matter to approach the ruined mosque, but quite another task to climb the tower. The cluttered village street was all in shadow, but the moon shone full on the mosque wall, showing it all in ruins with the broken tower beside it, erect and unclimbable.

The place was typical of Arab "culture"—jumbled, tumbled, cluttered, evil-smelling, verminous; war had only multiplied the normal chaos. That minaret had been the only decent building, and it remained the only thing worth anybody's trouble.

There was one little slit of a window visible almost directly facing the moon. It looked faintly luminous.

"D'you suppose there's glass in it?" asked Catesby. "Does that look like reflected light to you?"

Narayan Singh scouted closer to investigate. The window was much too high to reach, but he climbed on a broken wall to reach its level and returned at the end of ten minutes, stopping on his way to examine the ground close to the door. A slash of white across the blackness of his beard betrayed that he was pleased with the result.

"I heard no sound, *sahib;* but there is no glass, and there is a light within. Moreover, I found this."

He put a scarab ring into Catesby's hand.

"Jimgrim *sahib's!*" cried the Sikh.

"How d'you know? They're common enough. It might be any one's."

"Ask the *butcha.*"

Suliman examined it and grew excited at once.

"*Taibl* That is Jimgrim's. I have cleaned it for him fifty times."

"I suppose they've killed him."

Catesby had been too much of late under the brigadier's harrow to be an optimist.

"Nay, *sahib*. More likely he dropped it there for me to find. If they had killed him we should have found his naked body in that cave or thereabouts. If they had looted the ring and dropped it when they reached this place, they would have missed it and have looked. It lay in full moonlight on the flat side of a broken stone against the wall."

"Then I go," said Suliman, "to break that door down with this *kukri.*"

"*Ahsti, ahstil*" said the Sikh. "What is your judgment, *sahib?*"

CATESBY was in high spirits again. It took a Jenkins to depress him, and not much more than a symptom of encouragement to set him up.

"No sense in rushing things. If he's dead, he's dead. If he's alive in there we'll get him. Is there another door?"

"None, *sahib*. I saw all around the place."

"Then we'll watch this one until morning, and creep up close enough to hear if anything happens. Look about for a beam to

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have handy in case we should want to burst the door in."

Together they pulled a roof-beam out from a mess of fallen thatch, and laid it where they could find it in the dark that would shut down when the moonlight waned. Then Narayan Singh crept close to the door and listened. He was grinning again when he returned.

"He is in there, and alive. I heard his voice. I could not hear the words. He seemed to be close to the door and to be carrying on a conversation. Shall I go back and rap on the door softly as a signal?"

"No. It might be the signal for his death. How many voices did you hear?"

"One other."

"He'd be sure to yell if they tried to murder him. In that case, down with the door. But if we go to his rescue before he needs us we might spoil his game."

"*Atcha, sahib,*" said the Sikh; but he examined both pistols again and plainly did not like the inactivity.

It relieved his anxiety a little, however, when Catesby chose a black hole to hide in among the tumbled ruins of the mosque within twenty paces of the minaret door.

NOBODY who has not tried it, out hunting or in war, can guess how hard it is to listen attentively and scratch himself at the same time. Suliman, who not so many months ago had been clothed in little else than paupers' lice and had hardly had time to forget the indifference that goes with it, suffered least. Perhaps, too, his carcass was less appetizing.

But the Sikh is a clean race, prone to look down on even the tubbed and scrubbed British officer as none too particular. And that heap of ruins was alive with myriads of the body-insects, "whose seed is in themselves" and that exist apparently eternally on nothing until warm-blooded provender arrives.

Yet they did not dare move away. The moon was too low in the sky, and whoever had brought Jim to that place would be likely to make a move of some kind before morning, or at least soon after sunrise. If this were a rendezvous of thieves, whoever approached it would likely do some careful scouting in advance. There was nothing for it but to lie still and scratch—and swear—and scratch.

The Sikh's ears were sharpest, and once he swore he heard the voice of a man begging mercy.

"Maybe Jimgrim has a man down?" ventured Suliman.

But the other two grew nervous, and this time it was Catesby who crawled to the door to listen while Narayan Singh watched the coast. Catesby, too, distinguished the voices of two men, or thought he did; but the door was too thick for him to hear one word or establish Jim's identity. He crept back again into hiding in that divided frame of mind from which small comfort ever comes, wondering what he would think of himself should it turn out afterward that Jim had been all along in peril of his life—already dead perhaps; yet recalling Jim's words earlier that night, that it would be better to wait for a week than spoil things by a false move.

When dawn came, what with insects and indecision they were thoroughly miserable, stiff, sore, hungry and depressed by the zero-hour self-consciousness that sheds the drear light of cold unreason on every circumstance. Suliman, who had been blubbering, fell asleep again.

Catesby's thoughts were back on Jenkins and the hopelessness of clearing himself of a false charge in view of the brigadier's notorious ability to lie plausibly. Narayan Singh was squatting with eyes half-closed, dreaming in another language and another dimension, for that matter; not even the Sikhs can tell each other what thoughts reach them when the far-away look settles on their faces.

None of them saw the morning visitors arrive until the twelfth and last of them came abreast and the first one struck the door with cautious knuckles. They were ordinary-looking *fellaheen*—villagers, that is—and each man carried some ordinary-looking load or other—baskets, mats, bags, a patchwork quilt.

The last man led a donkey—one of those bruised and tortured little insects that make less noise than a ghost and eat endless Arab blows and insult in return for overwork. None of the men had a weapon as far as it was possible to see; for lack of the customary thick club the last man used his fist on the donkey's nose as a hint that it was time to stand still.

The leading man knocked half a dozen times; then the door opened and they all filed in, but from where the watchers lay it

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was not possible to see who opened it. The donkey went in too, and the lock squealed again behind her.

There followed further agonies of indecision and impatience; for, weapons or no weapons, there is no limit at all to the senseless cruelty of which the *fellaheen* are capable. Like their prototypes of Egypt the Palestinians have such a heritage of oppression to look back on that their actions are simply a matter of mood.

They smolder, as it were, in childlike harmlessness for periods whose probable duration no psychologist can guess; and burst out into senseless, superstitious fury without any apparent cause. Fear they understand always; fair treatment never, having no education in it. Jim would be about as safe in their hands as among sheep or wolves, whichever mood was uppermost.

It was probably intuition that held Catesby's hand. Narayan Singh was all for action—for storming the door and holding up the crowd within at pistol-point, his one obsession being that order given him half-jokingly by Colonel Goodenough to bring Jim back to Jerusalem alive. He snarled between his teeth at Catesby, urging force, and laughing. It is a bad sign when a Sikh does that.

"Hold your tongue!" Catesby ordered him.

Having to control the other did him good. He realized almost for the first time how the court martial hanging over his head had lowered his own opinion of himself to a degree that the Sikh's more subtly receptive mind had found contagious. He braced himself deliberately.

Hitherto he had almost unconsciously submitted to the rule that, being technically under arrest, he was technically void of the right to command. Now he fell back on the racial issue. Right or wrong, the white man has his place above the black, and above all the grades of color whether ebony or yellow, Aryan, Mongol or Ethiopian.

NARAYAN SINGH recognized the change. The world being what it is, a product of past history, improving only gradually, men still like leaders; and the braver and more self-disciplined the man the less he appreciates a leader in whose face he may sneer with impunity.

There was absolutely nothing menial about Narayan Singh; he was a high-chinned man, who would polish his officer's boots for pride in the well-groomed officer. But the officer good enough to have his harness cleaned by him and lead him must know his own mind. He would rather be told to hold his tongue by a mistaken strong man than be allowed his own way by a weakling. If it were not so, there would be no leaders and no led.

Having made up his mind to await the event and shoulder the full responsibility, Catesby scratched himself philosophically. He was no longer a victim, nor could the fact that he was lousy lower his self-respect. Whatever he had done rightly hitherto that night was due to intuition and old habits of thinking that survive under imposed disgrace, making it impossible for a true man to become untrue, or a leader incapable of leading, except gradually, step by step.

Now it was as if a cloud of depression vanished. He did thenceforward what he consciously chose to do, captain of his own soul and master of his destiny. Even Suliman, waking drowsily, sensed the difference.

They did not wait very long. The door opened again and the donkey came forth first, loaded so heavily that it could hardly stagger and showing its teeth because of the biting tightness of the cords that kept the load in place.

Over it all like a Joseph's coat of many colors they had tied the patchwork quilt, knotting it under the animal's belly; the suggestion that conveyed, whether it was intentional or not—you can't ever gage the *fellaheen's* simplicity or artfulness—was that they were honest villagers removing their household goods. Only a very suspicious observer would have balked at their having no women with them to carry the heaviest burdens.

The men filed out one by one after the donkey, each with a heavier load than he took in with him, but using what he had brought to cover or contain what he had come for—sacks—baskets—mats and an old tarpaulin knotted by the corners and carried between two men. The only remarkable difference was that whereas twelve men had entered, thirteen now came out, and there remained at least one inside to lock the door after them.

The thirteenth man looked cleaner than the rest, and carried no bundle. Also his right wrist was raw and seemed painful; and when he rubbed it with the other hand

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a bright red weal became visible on the left wrist too.

Suddenly Suliman leaped to his feet. Catesby clapped a hand on his mouth and dragged him down again only in the nick of time.

"Keep quiet, you little ——!" he whispered. "Yes, I know it's Jimgrim."

He knew exactly what to do now; needed no advice or urging from Narayan Singh. He waited only until he could speak without risk of the twelve men hearing him. There was not the slightest need for hurry. He let them go a hundred yards and disappear beyond the ruined village wall before he gave an order. Then:

"Narayan Singh, you wait here and watch that door. If any one comes out, arrest him. If any one else goes in, all right; wait and watch. But in that case don't let any one out on any terms; drive 'em back with your pistol; shoot if you must, but hold 'em in there somehow until help comes. If nothing happens don't show yourself. Do you understand?"

"*Malum, sahib.*"

"Now Suliman—how long is it since you begged? Have you forgotten? Off with your boots—socks too—leave 'em here. You're dirty enough, Lord knows. Better leave your head-gear too. Tear your pants a bit; you're too well cared for to look plausible. Now some more dust in your hair. You'll do.

"Follow now, and beg from Jimgrim. Don't look back at me, and don't take no for an answer. If they turn and beat you, stick to them. Pretend you're so hungry that you don't mind being hurt. Cut along."

He lifted the youngster out of the dark hole and pitched him on to his feet outside. A moment later he followed as far as the gap in the wall. From that point he could watch what happened without any risk of being seen.

THE missionairies and police know best what perfectly consummate actors Arab children are. Their elders have grown set in the accepted ways, so that a grown man or woman seldom varies from a given method; usually the people of one village thieve and lie to a pattern, and are all at sea when any one gets acquainted with their habit.

But the children are less conservative, until the years bring on that eastern intellectual inertia that is partly due to Koran teaching and partly to polygamy. Suliman had lost none of his natural alertness yet, and he had not been long enough in Jim's control to lose delight in mischief for the sake of lawlessness.

So he accepted that part perfectly. Running until he was breathless—fingering the sweat into the corners of his eyes until it looked like tears—plucking grass as he ran, to chew and make the corners of his mouth filthy with green slime, he overtook the procession and begged alms in the name of Allah.

Nor did he go to Jim first, but singled out the owner of the donkey; for the beggar's principle is to flatter with first attention whoever has most in view of this world's goods, thus sometimes stirring a ridiculous, unconscious sense of rivalry. Human nature is absurd stuff, or the beggars would all be at work producing.

Clearly those twelve men were in no mood to be generous. They cursed the boy as he approached them one by one; and when he would not go, but clung to them like one of those persistent Palestinian flies, bleating his parrot-cry of hunger with the same indifference to "*Imshi!*" * that the flies show to an angry hand, they picked up clods to heave at him. But he dodged those, cursed the throwers as a matter of etiquet, and came back with the same persistence.

If the thirteenth man recognized him he gave no sign of it; and Suliman seemed to consider him not worth an effort, judging him with the beggar's rule in mind as a *maskin*† because he walked last. It would have been an insult to the rest and rank bad form, clods notwithstanding, to have begged from him before giving the men ahead first chance to show their quality.

So when he did at last approach Jim and cling to the skirt of his *abyi* nobody suspected old acquaintance. Jim told him gruffly to "*imshi*," like the rest of them, although one corner of his mouth quivered slightly in the faint beginnings of a smile. He might as well have tried to "*imshi*" a change in the weather. Suliman clung on, and begged like an old hand at the game. The East believes in importunity and sets as high a value on reiteration as do the advertisers of the West.

*"Clear out!"
†Poor man.

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The clod-throwing ceased because, unlike the curses that did not cease, one could not throw them any longer without hitting Jim. So Jim had to pause a minute to shake the persistent little nuisance off. And as most of the other twelve were shouting coarse obscenities, that gave him a chance to whisper without being overheard.

"Get away, you little ——!" Then, *sotto voce*—

"Where is Captain Catesby?"

"He is in sight. Oh, in the name of Allah——"

"Let Allah feed you. (*Follow me then.*) Go and scavenge. Go and steal. Am I God that I should feed you?"

Bleating piteously, and shedding tears that would have made the fabulous weeping crocodile look like a very poor actor indeed, Suliman turned aside to squat by the side of what had once been a cart-road but had grown to a mere track since bombardment wiped the village out. But he did not stay in that position much longer than was needed to be out of range of missiles.

THE normal daylight activity of camp and town was under way. Bugles were blowing. Guards had been relieved. Long strings of mules and horses were being led to water at the troughs. Engines were moving in the station yard, and strings of Egyptian laborers were slouching sullenly to work in the railway sheds. Donkeys, women and other beasts of burden were emerging from the town, where the muezzin had long since finished wailing his injunction to the four winds.

One cartload of merchandise was already on its way from railway to town, and the kites were patrolling overhead on the watch for offal and remains. Suliman had a perfect right to head for the town, too, if he saw fit.

So had Catesby, looking like any other shiftless Arab meditating breakfast. He strolled along the cart track leisurely, with his head down, imitating the measured native gait that looks so dignified but oftener than not means merely pride of laziness.

As he walked, fingering the pistol under his heavy brown cloak, he began wondering just how much the night's work had accomplished in the matter between Jenkins and himself. Adding it all up he could not make the total come to anything at all.

Suddenly he laughed, though. There was a hundred-piaster bank-note taken from a dead man! But Narayan Singh had found that, and if the real ownership should never be established no doubt it would be awarded to the Sikh. He took out the crumpled note and examined it, taking care to keep Suliman just in sight.

He was not at all expert in Arabic, but presently he whistled, for he could spell out the thin, cramped, right-to-left writing when he took the time. An Arab writing with a fine pen can condense a deal of information on a half-sheet of ordinary notepaper.

The strip that fastened the halves of the note together was of generous proportions; it had been cut off with scissors, and looked like the lower third of a half-sheet. The gum used was very ordinary office paste, with the result that one corner had come loose and curled upward, betraying writing on both sides.

And because of the fact that Arabs write from right to left and, like some careless Westerners, reverse the sheet by turning it end over end, the name of the man to whom that document had originally been addressed and of the man who wrote it were both on the cut-off strip of paper. The first name—that on the gummed side—was Brigadier-General Jenkins. The other was "your honor's humble servant, Ibrahim Charkas."

Having spelled out that information, Catesby returned the note to his pocket and hurried forward, for Suliman was just entering the town street. He was not going to be fool enough to trust Suliman with the hundred piasters to pass along to Jim, having considerably less than Jim's high opinion of the boy. That was reciprocated.

Catesby's specialty was Sikhs. Being an Arab, Suliman's gift lay in personal devotion to whoever fed, clothed and favored him. It is not a bad gift, that personal loyalty, but there is nothing in it of the Sikh's wider idealism that attaches him to persons only because those persons stand for honorable service. Catesby lacked Jim's ability, which is wholly American, to ferret out the strong points of any breed whatever and play those sky-high.

The result was unfortunate. Suliman followed the party of thirteen to a small shed

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that stood beside a big one near the farther limit of the town. Into that they disappeared, donkey and all.

Suliman lurked in a doorway a hundred yards off, and Catesby watched him from a point of vantage behind the awning of a fruit-seller's shop. From where he stood he could read the name of the Zionist Commission on the door of the big shed.

At the end of about twenty minutes the donkey and the thirteen men emerged, Jim last again. The twelve went about their business separate ways, but Jim sat down to warm himself, Arab-fashion, in the early sun and lighted a cigaret.

When the last of the twelve was out of sight Suliman approached Jim with the beggar's whine again. They talked for about two minutes, and a coin changed hands for appearance's sake. Then Suliman came up-street to beg from Catesby. There was no one to overhear them—no need to beat about the bush.

"Jimgrim says you are to go back to Narayan Singh and tell him not to kill the *iblis*, who is in that place he is watching. He says you should stay with Narayan Singh, so that when Jimgrim wants you he can find you."

NOW if a Sikh had brought that message Catesby would have accepted it without demur. Moreover, he would have given that hundred-piaster note to a Sikh to give to Jim. But the eight-year-old Arab was different.

"Go back and say I have something for him. Ask him whether I shall go to him, or will he come to me. Say it's important."

"Give me whatever it is. He told me to come back to him."

"Do as I say."

There followed a considerable waste of time. Suliman did not dare to go running back with the message, knowing well enough that inquisitive observers might draw conclusions. He had the practical common sense to enter a shop and buy two native cigarets "for the *khawaja* sitting yonder in the sun," as he was careful to explain.

The shopman was inquisitive, and had to be lied to *in extenso*, which took up more time. Finally Jim received the cigarets, and returned one to the messenger as gratuity. Thanks to Suliman there was nothing to call for comment.

But Jim had to sit and smoke the cigaret in order to complete the innocent picture, and it was several minutes before he strolled up the street to where Catesby waited and went through the forms of pleased surprize and the lengthy Arab greeting of an unexpected friend. After that they strolled side by side, very slowly as befitted Arabs in the circumstances, and that entailed further delay.

Catesby gave him the hundred-piaster note. Jim examined it and whistled softly—a thing no Arab ever does; but the revelation startled him, and there was no one to overhear. Catesby explained briefly how he came by it; and then they went through the formula of leave-taking for the benefit of onlookers, which consumed another minute or two.

At last, however, Catesby went off alone to share Narayan Singh's vigil, and took his time on the way because no Arab ever hurries if that can possibly be helped. So it was twenty minutes more before he reached the deserted village and another five minutes after that before he discovered Narayan Singh.

The Sikh was lying in a dead man's tortured posture on the ground, and just beginning to recover consciousness. A stone the size of a coconut lay beside his head. It was ten more minutes before Catesby could get a word out of him.

"The door opened, *sahib*, and that *iblis* showed his head. I ordered him in again. He shut the door, and I watched it. A few minutes after that he showed himself over the top of the wall, and I, having orders not to shoot him, merely observed. Then he threw three stones at me, and the third one struck my head."

"How long ago did this happen? Soon after I left?"

"Nay. A long time after you left. I have been stunned—how should I know how long? But I think it happened just a very little while ago."

Catesby tried the door, but it was locked. So he set a charred beam against the wall and climbed, to peer in through the window. As far as he could see the place was empty; and presently, scouting about, he found the imprints of two enormous naked feet in the dust. They were pointed away from the door, and he hardly could doubt they were those of the escaping *iblis*.

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CHAPTER X

"Acting on information received."

ALL the ambitious men and women of history have come to grief finally by walking straight ahead into the same old simple trap. It is painted differently for different men, and the bait is big or little as the case may be. The goads that make them restless, so that they move when the trap is ready instead of staying still, are pretty much the same in most cases; and, just as in the case of the tiger in his prime, there are usually jackals giving bad advice.

Jenkins was no exception. Taking advantage of the long-drawn interim between the armistice and the issuing of mandates, he had made of that camp at Ludd a very breeding-ground of politics.

As a fighter he had obtained distinction by stealing the credit for other men's successes for himself and by contriving to blame others for his failures. And he had no use for credit except as a means for making profit. So of course he had jackals tagging his heels impatiently, men who admired his disrespect for all the accepted rules of fair play and who would have outdone his methods if they had dared. One of them was Captain Aloysius Ticknor.

Ticknor likewise had ambitions, and was perfectly ready to sacrifice Jenkins at any moment for their attainment. But for the present Ticknor saw more immediate profit in working for his chief's advancement, like a man who rears a ladder to climb by, meaning to kick it down afterward or leave it leaning, just as suits him.

They were not in each other's secrets, because Jenkins never trusted any one if he could help it. He preferred to make hints and innuendoes, on the strength of which a subordinate might use his own judgment. If the subordinate made good, then Jenkins got the credit; if the subordinate failed there was only one more victim on the long list of ruined youngsters "Jinks" had left behind him.

So Aloysius Ticknor, who would lose money to Jenkins at cards, for instance, and generally win it back with something added from junior subalterns, was exactly in the position of a jackal craving meat who did not know the tiger's real intentions although sure of the tiger's hunger. Jackal fashion he diagnosed the brigadier's nervous restlessness and offered the sort of advice he felt sure would be acceptable.

He was another pro-Arab, anti-Zionist, of course. You had to be that if you hoped to stay in Jenkins' good books for a minute.

"Why don't you send me into town, sir, to look things over?"

"Might fall foul of the provost-marshal," Jenkins answered. "He's one of those stuffy ——s who resent what they call interference."

"If you show him up as incompetent by finding a cache of rifles under his very nose—" suggested Ticknor.

"Um-m-m! Be a joke, wouldn't it? Not difficult either. The fool has his eye on Arabs all the time. There isn't an Arab store or dwelling that he hasn't searched. If the Arabs had one rifle hidden he'd have found it. He seems to think Jews are gentle angels who wouldn't do anything secretive if you paid them money for it."

"Suppose I look the Zionist quarters over, sir?"

"I'm not going to give you orders over the provost-marshal's head, if that's what you're driving at. If you can think of another excuse——"

"Oh, easily. You remember those three condemned huts? They're to be advertised for sale. I could go and inquire whether the Zionists would like to have them—promise nothing, of course, but offer to use influence."

"Yes, you might do that. But be sure you promise nothing. I shan't need you this morning. You can go for a stroll if you like," he added. "Buy yourself some souvenirs."

And he made a note in his diary there and then that he had given Ticknor personal leave of absence. He did it in pencil to be inked in later, so that he might change "personal" into "particular" if he should see fit.

SO CAPTAIN ALOYSIUS TICKNOR, with nice red tabs on his collar and the glow of astuteness radiating from him till he looked like light personified, started out with two dogs at his heels, swinging his service cane. Half an hour later, sweating rather more than he liked, because it offset his studied air of omniscient aloofness, he arrived in front of the Zionist store-shed on the far side of the town.

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The door was locked, but a short, broad-shouldered, sweaty little Jew in black New York-made pants and a gray shirt was busy nailing scrap tin over a broken window-pane.

"Are you in charge here?" Ticknor asked him.

The Jew laid down the hammer and eyed him suspiciously. It was no more than hereditary mistrust of uniform because officialdom has always meant oppression for the Jew; but it was enough in itself to stir the lees of Ticknor's racial arrogance.

"Can't you answer? I asked, are you in charge here?"

"In charge of this hammer, yes. It is not my hammer. I make repairs—see?"

"Where's the key of the place?"

"I have it."

"Open the door then."

The Jew did not cringe, having left that uningratiating vice behind him in Moscow when he emigrated to America, but he obeyed with alacrity that might have disarmed Ticknor's suspicion. But Ticknor was feeling jubilant. He had come prepared to hide his real mission under a cloak of friendly interest and was naturally relieved to find that he could lay aside the hypocrisy. There might have been some one there who would have resented intrusion—some Zionist official on his dignity; and of all things in the world that he hated, the worst was having to be polite to people he disliked.

He walked straight into the great musty-smelling shed the instant the door opened, seeing in imagination a sort of pirates' stronghold piled full of contraband. But when his eyes grew used to the dim light he saw only very ordinary stores—spare hospital supplies, flour in barrels, clothing in bundles, tar, tools, and calico in bales—extremely disappointing.

However, Jews are secretive and cunning. Doubtless there were rifles hidden in the bales—ammunition in the barrels. He nosed about all over the place, pushing things aside to see what lay behind or underneath them. Presently he found a bale that had been opened and wired up again.

"Come here, you!" he called. "Here, open this!"

That overstepped the limit of forbearance even of the individual in black pants. He came in, scratched the back of his head, rubbed his nose and went through motions with his other hand suggestive of deference and blunt refusal that fought one with the other. A slight shrug of the shoulders indicated absence of responsibility; but he said nothing.

"D'you hear me? Open it!"

"But why?"

The answer aroused suspicion to the danger-point. Where prejudice is strong judgment is always weak. Ticknor set to work to do the job himself, twisting at the wires with impatient fingers under the eyes of the bewildered Jew. He had got one wire undone when some one else darkened the doorway.

"WHAT is this?"

Ticknor turned impatiently to see a Jew of another type altogether watching him from the door through gold-rimmed pince-nez—the very man he did not want to meet that morning, but for whose benefit he had come prepared with the plausible excuse about the condemned huts. Aaronsohn was one of the intellectuals, a man of considerable private means, journalist and poet, who had thrown his whole fortune and energy into the Zionist movement.

Caught in the act of trespass without authority, and with dust clinging to the sweat on his face and neck, he felt at a disadvantage that Aaronsohn appreciated fully. There seemed nothing for it but to bluff the thing through.

"Acting on information received," he said, "I am searching for stolen Government property."

"Acting on circumstantial evidence, I am now on my way to General Anthony to lodge a complaint against you," Aaronsohn answered with a grim smile. "But perhaps you have something in writing?"

"No need of it," Ticknor answered.

"No? We will see about that. Perhaps I had better see first what damage you have done."

"Perhaps you'd better open that bale and satisfy me what's inside it," sneered Ticknor.

Aaronsohn obliged him. And because the bale stood wedged between others, which made it awkward to unbind, he and the man in black pants dragged it out to the middle of the floor between them. There proved to be nothing in it but gray flannel shirts, each marked at the neck with the name of a New York manufacturer.

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Aaronsohn chose to be sarcastic, twenty-five years' use of an acid pen having left that habit on the surface.

"I will leave you in charge of the plunder," he said, smiling with thin lips. "Stay here, and let me ask General Anthony to send you assistance."

Conscious of the strength of his position, and too old a hand at reprisals to waste invective on a man he could annihilate by much more concrete means, he walked straight out at that, leaving the door wide open.

Ticknor swore under his breath, reviewing his own position without getting any comfort from it. He knew he might depend on Jenkins to let him down completely, for he was under no delusion as to the brigadier's method of self-preservation.

It occurred to him presently that his one meager chance lay in still discovering what he came to find. It might be after all that Aaronsohn's indignation was a well-acted bluff.

What had brought the Jew there at that critical moment? What could possibly have brought him there but nervousness? What could have sent him hurrying off to Anthony but the hope of stopping the search before the secret was uncovered.

Thinking thus, his eye fell on the twelve square feet of floor where the bale had stood before they dragged it clear. He saw hinges —the butt-ends of long strap hinges passing under the next bale on the left.

"What's under this floor?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said the man in black pants.

"Drag that next bale away."

He helped him do it, and uncovered a trap-door.

Hope ran ace-high again. He was the same alert, astute Aloysius Ticknor who had started forth that morning dreaming of high politics. Even his two dogs, sniffing for rats in a corner, seemed to appreciate the change, for they left their pressing business to come and wag their tails at him.

"Open her up!" he ordered.

Might as well be broke for burglary as trespass. Besides, all successful men take chances.

But the trap-door would not raise. It was fastened down with one long nail driven in to the head. The man in black pants produced a crowbar from a corner and lent the strength of his stocky shoulders.

"I'll remember that in your favor," said Ticknor, not supposing that the Jew's readiness to help might be due to anything but the instinct of self-preservation.

Some men can convince themselves of anything they want to believe. Ticknor would have betted a year's pay that minute on there being loot under the floor, and another year's pay on top of that that both Aaronsohn and this man knew it.

So he was not surprized, he was merely elated and self-complacent when the nail came splintering out of the wood and the door creaked back at last. He did not stop to consider why the hinges should have yielded so reluctantly, or to study the rust on the ancient nail. There was too much down below to interest him—rifles, cartridges, revolvers, bayonets—the plunder of months from Ludd encampment!

That was a minute of triumph, worth ten times the sting of Aaronsohn's sarcastic insolence. Lord, wouldn't Jenkins be pleased! And think of Aaronsohn's chagrin! And the provost-marshal's, who had had his eye well wiped!

He jumped down into the cellar, struck a match and looked about him, but did not trouble to go as far as the end wall because there was hardly head-room and he had to stoop. Besides there might be snakes and vermin. So he did not notice a door at the end, communicating with the smaller shed next door, nor see the print of footsteps leading from it.

HE CLIMBED out again, sweating and dusty but almost bursting with pleasure at his good luck. The Jew in black pants, peering down into the hole beside him, felt it incumbent to translate his thoughts into speech that might be understood.

"Well, I never! Those Arabs, mister there is nothing they stop at! As a snake in the grass so is an Arab!"

"Lies about Arabs won't help you, my lad! You'd better stay here. Understand me?"

"Sure I stay here."

Ticknor laughed.

"You're a strange race. I never saw such perfectly acted conscious innocence. Talk of Chinamen—they're not in it with you."

He went to the door and looked up and down the street, hoping to catch sight of a soldier or policeman—any one at all who

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might be sent to bring the provost-marshal's men; or better yet, sent running with a note to Jenkins.

There was no one in uniform in sight. He scribbled a note on the back of a private letter, replaced it in its envelope, readdressed it to the brigadier, contrived to seal it after a fashion by relicking the old gum, and beckoned a small boy who was sitting smoking outside a shop on the opposite side of the street fifty yards away.

Preferring not to advertise his find too widely for the moment, he judged it better to do his talking inside the building. So the small boy got a good view of the open trapdoor, and a glimpse of what lay underneath.

"Listen. Do you know General Jenkins?"

The small boy nodded. There were few things he ever forgot, once he had rubbed acquaintance with them.

"Do you know how to find him?"

He nodded again.

"Take this letter to him, but don't show it to anybody else. If you come back quickly with an answer I'll give you five piasters."

The bribe was enormous. The small boy took the envelope and started off at a run. Ticknor returned to the trap-door to gloat over his discovery and smoke the cigaret of triumph.

So again he missed something that might have given him thought. The boy stopped at the shop near which he had been sitting, and called through the open door.

"Oh, Jimgrim!"

A man in Arab costume came and stood in the shadow between the door-posts.

"Over there in the big shed there is a trapdoor. It is open. Underneath are rifles. An officer gave me this."

"Who is it for?"

"General Jenkins."

"All right. Run with it."

Suliman sat and pulled his boots off, for they were a concession to convention, not adjuncts of speed. Stringing them round his neck by the laces he set off as fast as youth would let him.

Jimgrim turned back into the shop, smiling with tired eyes, to resume a conversation with a real Arab where it had been broken off.

"Now, Ibrahim Charkas. Let's have that over again. No lies this time or I'll wring your neck."

CHAPTER XI

"There is money . . . take it and go away."

WHEN Jim received the hundred-piaster note from Suliman he went at once into Mahommed Kaftar's coffee-shop and steamed it over the kettle until it fell into the original three pieces—two ragged halves and a strip of gummed paper. Then he drank coffee leisurely until the paper dried, turning it over on his knee and chuckling to himself.

"Mustn't say a word against Jenkins—um-m-m!"

Sir Henry Kettle's and General Anthony's injunction began to fit, still vaguely, into something suggestive of strategy based on information.

"Give a rascal rope enough and he's sure to hang himself."

But one must take precautions lest he trip too many others with the rope before the end comes. He made up his mind to see Ibrahim Charkas at once, not that there would be any obvious advantage to the community in saving that evasive rascal from the consequence of dallying with Jinks' spider-web; but he did have instructions to discover who stole that TNT, and if one thing should lead to another, and that to Jinks' downfall, he would still be obeying orders.

Ibrahim Charkas ran one of those nondescript Arab stores in which everything was sold from sewing-thread to tinned biscuits and souvenir photographs. He had even sold whisky until the provost-marshal interfered. Loss of the surreptitious liquor trade had cost him the custom of Sikhs and Gurkhas in addition to a staggering fine, so that business was not what it used to be and the stock in trade looked the part.

Dogged at a little distance by Suliman, who would not have traded his employment just then for a promise of paradise, Jim strolled up-street looking like an Arab whose wives were attending to business for him, lord of the earth and of leisure. There were plenty of other Arabs in the street and he had to be careful, but he watched his chance outside Charkas' shop to toss Suliman a coin with which to buy breakfast and tell him to wait within call. Then he went in ostensibly for cigarets.

Charkas came out obsequiously from a little room in the rear to greet him, for the day was past when the store would support

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an assistant, except for a mere fetch-and-carry nonentity, who could hardly be trusted to sweep the place out lest he steal whatever he could reach. Just then the nonentity was away on some kind of errand.

"*Shu bitrid, ya khawaja?*" (What do you want, sir?")

Jim countered in English, and opened with his heaviest gun, laying down the two portions of the bank-note on a table at the back of the shop.

"Just take a look at those. When did you see them last?"

Charkas did not seem to know which to be surprized at more—the question or being addressed in English.

"Who are you that prefer a foreign language to your own?"

"None of your business! This is your business—this note—it's important—when did you see it last?"

"How should I know? I never saw it. I don't accept torn money."

"Look again. It was pasted together when you saw it last. I know where you had it from, but how did you get rid of it?"

"To whom should I pay a hundred piasters? Tee-hee-hee! Absurd! The business of this store is no longer that much in a week."

"Did you ever see this?" Jim asked him, turning over the strip of paper in both hands so as to show first the signature of Charkas on one side and then Jenkins' name on the other. "It came off the back of that note."

Charkas began to look like a cornered rat. The pupils of his eyes became pin-points, and narrow teeth showed prominently between his thin, parted lips. He made a quick motion with his hand, but Jim was quicker and seized him by both arms. Jim put his foot on it, and then picked up the strip of paper he had had to let fall.

"Better not try to make a hanging matter of it. Better use your head. It's fairly easy to make sense out of this writing. It's a letter from you to General Jenkins describing what certain men are doing, what they intend to do, and stating why you need more money. Jenkins gave you that hundred piasters. What did you do with it?"

THERE naturally flashed across Charkas' mind his recent interview with Jenkins, of which Jim knew nothing, any more than Jim knew that the man from whom the hundred-piaster note had been taken did not come by it from some one else, who in turn might have had it from a third man. Charkas decided that Jenkins must have betrayed him, more than making good the threat not to come to his aid if needed. But he was still cautious.

"Who are you?" he asked again.

In strategy there is no sounder rule than to follow up one surprize with another one, the second if possible more unexpected than the first. The first one destroys confidence; the second promotes hysteria.

"I'm the man who found in Jerusalem the TNT that was stolen from the railway here."

Charkas turned to look about wildly for a weapon. Swift murder and sudden flight were all he could think of. He looked twice longingly toward a desk in the dingy back office.

"Come in here," he said mysteriously.

Jim kicked the knife into a corner and followed him so quickly that he reached the desk abreast of him. Their hands closed on the lid simultaneously. Jim's right hand forced Charkas into a chair. With his left he raised the lid.

"Thought so!"

There was a revolver and a dagger with a wavy edge.

"Which would you have used? Um-m-m! I guess you're scared enough to have fired and alarmed the town. Let's see what else is in here—sit still, now! Don't move or I'll get a rope out of the store and tie you."

He put his foot on the Arab's lap to keep him from bolting while he searched through a litter of papers at random. They were mostly bills, receipts and private letters. Nothing of obvious importance.

"There is money at the back," said Charkas. "Take it and go away."

Jim whistled. Charkas shuddered. There is nothing in the world some Arabs hate so much as that. They say only the devil whistles. One can never know beforehand for certain, of course, but Charkas was hardly the kind of man one would expect to believe in that superstition.

Adding the shudder to the offer of the bribe, Jim drew a false conclusion that led nevertheless to discovery. Supposing that Charkas' anxiety was for the papers in the desk, he went on searching; whereas the man actually was past fear on that account, thinking now of nothing but how to escape; and his nerves were in such a state that the whistle tortured him.

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Jim found the money, glanced at it and tossed it aside. Then he turned over the papers again, stacking them one on top of the other, and presently whistled again.

"What in thunder did you keep this for?" he asked, removing his foot from Charkas' lap as he turned his back to the desk and laughed. "Are you the ringleader of thieves here, and keep the proof of it to show like a Government certificate?"

Suddenly a fragment of Charkas' native wit returned and he remembered why he had kept it.

"That is the memorandum informing General Jenkins that two tons of TNT were in a truck in the siding."

"So I see. Well?"

"General Jenkins gave it to me—into my hand!"

If Jenkins proposed to betray him, then two could play at that game. All the bitterness and venom that the Arab mind inherited from Ishmael and cultivated under Turkish rule came to the surface. Revenge looked sweeter at that minute than safety. Thoughts of flight vanished.

"General Jenkins gave me that hundred-piaster note. He has given me other sums from time to time. I will swear to it in court. He has been paying me to organize the thieving."

"Why?"

"In order to blame it on the Zionists. He hates Zionists. He is pro-Arab."

"And he gave you that memorandum so that you could steal the TNT?"

"So that my men could steal it, yes."

Jim tried not to look incredulous. It would take more than Charkas' word to convince him that Jenkins would be such a fool as that.

"When did he give it to you?"

"On the third, I think it was. Yes, on the evening of the third."

"At what time?"

"Five o'clock."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, because I met the afternoon train and walked up to his office afterwards."

"This is dated the third at four o'clock. He could only have just received it. Was he in the office when you went there?"

"He reached it just ahead of me. The messenger brought the note; he signed for it, read it, and handed it to me."

Jim laughed.

"You mean he turned away and you stole it off his desk—now don't you?"

CHARKAS denied that hotly—swore by the God of his fathers and by Mohammed and all the saints in paradise that Jenkins had given him the paper. But that was too obviously stupidly untrue. A blundering, fatuous schemer Jenkins might be, but not such a simpleton as that. There was proof on that slip of paper in Jim's pocket that Jenkins had known a lot about the thieving—probably proof enough to ruin him; but Jim's task was to let the brigadier ruin himself. In all likelihood Anthony would refuse to listen if he should come with the blackest proof imaginable.

"Look here," he said, "you're all in—d'you realize it? You've only got one chance—king's evidence. Come across with a clean story and I'll do my best for you."

The rat instinct for sudden flight crossed the Arab's mind again. He rolled his eyes toward the door secretively, but Jim saw that and put his foot back on the man's lap.

"Stay put!" he laughed, shoving him once or twice hard in the stomach. "Come on, spill the story. Who's the *iblis?*"

Charkas looked relieved. He even chuckled.

"He is an Egyptian. I do not know his name, but he is a great charlatan, who left Egypt because of the police. Now he is very much disturbed—tee-hee-hee! He is expert at encouraging the thieves. He gives them magic against bullets—tee-hee-hee! —and he demands two-thirds of all the plunder in return.

"But he cannot dispose of his share of the plunder without assistance; and he does not know where the men who come for it have hidden it. Tee-hee! he is very much exercised."

"I happen to know where they have hidden it," said Jim.

Charkas snickered scornfully.

"I don't believe you. How could you know?"

"I was with the *iblis* most of last night, and I went with the men who came at dawn to hide the stuff away. The *iblis* is waiting for me now to come back and tell him where they hid it."

Charkas threw his hands up in despair.

"You must be a bigger devil than the *iblis* himself!"

"Maybe. We'll discuss that later if you like. The point is, are you going to come

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across, or would you rather I'd arrest you now and take you straight to Jenkins?"

"What do you want of me?"

"The names of all your men. Here's a pencil. Here's paper. Write them down."

Charkas hesitated for a moment, then tried to wet the pencil on his dry lips and obeyed him.

"I will make a full confession because you have promised I shall escape imprisonment by doing so."

Jim laughed again.

"I dare say your sentence will be cut in half," he answered. "That's the best you can hope for. You can withdraw all you've said if you like, plead not guilty and take the consequences."

"No, no, no! I will confess and plead guilty."

It was at this point that Suliman called out through the doorway and Jim went out to speak with him, first pocketing the Arab's dagger and revolver, but forgetting the knife he had kicked into a corner. Charkas had not forgotten it, but when Jim returned to the inner office he was back in the chair again.

"Here is the list of names," he said, offering the sheet of paper.

Jim started to read it. All the light there was came through the office door and a dusty glass window set in the partition. He turned to let the light fall on the paper, and suddenly sprang backward.

The knife missed his stomach by a fraction of an inch. The blow was so savage that Charkas could not check it; his fist swung three-quarters of a circle and drove the knife nearly to the hilt into the wall behind.

"Nice sort of scorpion, aren't you! Leave the knife sticking there. Now sit back and tell me your story all over from the beginning."

This time Charkas was really convinced of helplessness, and beyond that he lied about everybody else and tried to represent himself as a more or less innocent weakling involved in crime unwillingly by Jenkins, told a moderately truthful tale.

By the time he had finished the brigadier himself came clattering down-street on horseback, jubilant at the news of Ticknor's discovery. Ten minutes or so later a platoon of British Tommies marched up, sweating freely, and took charge of the Zionist store-shed. Jenkins rode away again, red-faced with triumph, and Ticknor followed him on foot.

It was not ten minutes after that when Catesby came hurrying in search of Jim. He had shed his disguise and was back in uniform; and he had overtaken Suliman, who was returning tired and breathless for his five piasters from Ticknor. Suliman pointed out the shop door and followed Ticknor back again up-street.

"What's new?" asked Jim.

"Bad news for you. The *iblis* pretty nearly brained Narayan Singh with a piece of coping-stone, and scooted God knows where. I had to take Narayan Singh back to camp to have his head dressed, and the doctor ordered him to bed. What are you looking happy about?"

"The prospect of breakfast and sleep. Did you see Jinks?"

"Yes, looking as pompously pleased as a ripe tomato. The brute didn't acknowledge my salute."

"Never mind. Jinks is his sure-enough name, old man. You'll be out from under arrest almost before you know it. Too bad about the *iblis*, but we'll get him yet. Meanwhile, there's this crittur.

"Now you understand, Charkas, this officer is going to stay here and watch you until the provost-marhsal's men come, and you'll go with them under arrest. Take my advice and say nothing. Don't talk to any one. Don't answer questions.

"Let General Jenkins say what he pleases and do what he pleases. Hold your tongue until you see me again. So long, Catesby."

He left the shop and strolled up-street toward the camp as leisurely as if the heritage of all Arabia were sleeping in his veins. Presently Suliman tagged along after him, grinning with contentment for a five-piaster note.

CHAPTER XII

"Good sunny night to you! Sweet dreams!."

HAVING faced an *iblis* in the dark and slept at frequent intervals afterward, Suliman considered the lid on gambling lifted and set forth to stake the five piasters against the capital of certain small boys of the lines, in a mysterious card game that did not call for a complete pack, and of which only he knew the rules.

Jim got into uniform, found the provost-marshal and then went straight to Jenkins'

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office. The brigadier was radiant and red-faced in the center of flattering juniors, pouting his lips as he made little of the morning's work.

"Very simple. Obvious to any one with eyes in his head. I gave Ticknor his instructions, and there you are. Oh, hullo, Grim. Wiped your eye for you. Didn't need you after all. I told you we'd find Zionists at the bottom of this. What have you been doing?"

"Very little, I'm afraid. I arrested Ibrahim Charkas, though, this morning. Left him in charge of Captain Catesby until the provost's men could come and get him."

Jenkins changed color, flushing redder than ever, so that his ears and the back of his neck resembled rare roast beef.

"Catesby is under arrest himself," he snapped.

"His parole was lifted, sir, to give him opportunity to gather evidence in his own case."

"I know that. It was my doing. I wanted to give him every possible chance. I signed the order releasing him; but that doesn't give him authority to arrest people and hold prisoners. I shall have to look into this."

Jim hoped he would look into it, and held his tongue. Jenkins began to grow more obviously nervous every minute. The flatterers only irritated now, and he turned on them savagely.

"What are we all loafing here for? Is there nothing to do—no orders? You wait here a minute, Major Grim; I want to speak with you."

The juniors remembered urgent business suddenly, and left in different directions. Jenkins, jerking at his buffalo-horn mustache, turned and faced Jim.

"What did you arrest Charkas for?"

"On his own confession of his part in stealing the TNT."

"Um-m-m!"

The brigadier paced up and down the narrow room.

"What did he say?"

"That this is a full list of the thieves he has been employing."

Jenkins seized the sheet of paper.

"Excellent! Excellent! We can seize all these men and they'll be implicating one another within ten minutes. But you ought to have brought Charkas here to me before the provost interviews him. If this list is correct Charkas ought to be treated as a king's witness and released after the trial. However, I'll send this list to the provost with my compliments; it'll make him wince. Did you get the *iblis?*"

"No."

"Pouff!" sneered Jenkins.

Jim deliberately fed the fires of scorn, judging his man nicely.

"I thought I'd get some sleep, sir, and then go after him again."

"Sleep! Sleep? 'Pon my soul! Is that an American habit, to sleep while your hunted man runs? All right, go and sleep then! I'll attend to the rest of this myself. Good sunny night to you! Sweet dreams!"

But Jim did not sleep yet a while. He went first to Narayan Singh in the great, hot hospital marquee. The Sikh was fretting in impotent fury at being out of action, lying down because that had been ordered, but tossing like a fritter on the pan.

"I am all right, *sahib*. My head hurts, but that is nothing. I was stunned for a few minutes by a stone from the paw of that black ape that calls himself an *iblis*; but it would take ten such stones all striking in the same place to make me give up the hunt. Catesby *sahib*, who is a precaution-*wallah*, ordered me in here and I obeyed.

"You let me out again, Jimgrim *sahib*, and turn me loose with a rifle and bayonet. I will bring back that *iblis* for you like a beetle on a pin."

Jim had seen the doctor's memorandum of the case.

"Do you want to go after him?"

"When was I ever chicken-hearted, Jimgrim *sahib*, that you ask me that?"

"All right, go to sleep then. When it stands written on your report card that you've had five hours' sleep I'll fetch you out of here and we'll see."

The Sikh promptly shut his eyes and lay down flat on the cot. But Jim had hardly turned his back before he signaled the Jat orderly.

"Oh, brother," he said, "the doctor *sahib* will ask if I have slept, in order to write the record of it on a card. You know what the answer will be?"

"Always from me a truthful answer. So and so long you were sleeping—so and so long restless—so and so long talkative—

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so and so many drinks of water—temperature this and that. I am seeking promotion."

"Ah! Do they promote cripples, these *dakitars?*"

"Nay. A man needs strength to lift great carcasses like thine."

"If that *dakitar* learns I have not slept for five hours straight on end, you will be an orderly too badly crippled for promotion. That is my word. I have said it—I, Narayan Singh."

The orderly returned to his stool by the door, grumbling about the trials of a man who seeks to rise in his profession, and Narayan Singh, with his mind at last quite relieved, dropped off into the land of dreams, from which he was awakened at intervals by the sound of Suliman's voice behind the tent quarreling with two other urchins about the ever changing rules of chance.

At the end of an hour or two, when all the money in sight had found its way into Suliman's pocket, the three boys sat back against the tent to smoke stale cigar butts and gossip. It was in that way that Narayan Singh picked up some information that he put to good use later on.

JIM meanwhile met Catesby coming into camp ahead of Ibrahim Charkas, who was in charge of the provost's men.

"There's one thing for you to do now," he said. "Get conclusive proof of where you were on the afternoon of the third between four and five o'clock. The buffalo is going to blunder. I can see it coming."

"That's easy."

"Get your proof then, and keep it absolutely to yourself."

Jim still had one small errand before he could go to sleep himself. He went to General Anthony's marquee, and found to his secret delight that Jenkins was there ahead of him. The Zionist-journalist Aaronsohn was in there too, looking horribly uncomfortable in a thin-lipped, calm and collected way. Jenkins was still holding forth.

"The evidence is all in. I've asked the provost-marshal to exert himself in rounding up that list of Charkas' men. Charkas himself will swear that he was paid by the Zionists to steal rifles for them. The rifles were found in the Zionists' store. What more do you want?"

General Anthony uncrossed his legs and recrossed them, tapping on his desk with a pencil. He said nothing—not at all a rare habit of his.

"I've one thing more to add," said Jenkins. "I saw Charkas fifteen minutes ago. He tells me Major Grim has found the original memorandum from the R. T. O. to me about that TNT that was stolen—found it in Charkas' desk. Charkas proposes to turn king's witness, and he vows he had the memorandum from Captain Catesby, to whom he paid money for it."

Anthony looked visibly distressed. Jim tried hard to do the same.

"Don't you think we'd better cancel that parole altogether and order Catesby under close arrest?" said Jenkins stiffly.

Butter would not have melted in his mouth. You could tell at a glance how he hated to be mixed up, even in a judicial way, with such abominable misconduct in an officer.

"Yes," said Anthony. "Yes, yes, I'm afraid so."

He took pen and paper.

"One moment, sir," Jim interposed. "May I ask a question?"

"Fire away, Grim."

"Not you, sir; General Jenkins."

"Well?"

There was fire in Jinks' eye, by way of reminder that he who can break captains can break majors just as easily. But Jim's first words disarmed suspicion.

"About Charkas. He told me a long-winded story. I didn't write it down, but from memory I should say it bears out certain points of what you've just said."

Jenkins almost purred aloud. This was the handsome way to make amends. He there and then forgave Jim even that left-handed apology on the railway-station platform.

"Charkas told me among other things how he came to know about the existence of that railway memorandum. If what he said is true it may help cinch the case.

"He says you were down at the station to meet the four-o'clock train on the afternoon of the third; that he followed you up, because he wanted to ask some sort of favor; that you and he reached your office at about the same time; and that he saw you receive and open the memorandum. He says you laid it down for a minute, but

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he didn't have time to more than glance at it. So he formed the idea of getting hold of it somehow in order to learn the exact details. Does that correspond with your recollection of that afternoon?"

"Yes, I think it does. Yes, I did meet the train that day. Yes, I remember Charkas came to the office to bother me about something."

"About five o'clock, he said."

"Must have been almost exactly five o'clock."

Anthony began scribbling on a pad.

"Are you definite on that point, General Jenkins?"

"Certainly. My memory's exact. Charkas must have gone straight to Catesby and got the memorandum from him, because I gave Catesby his orders—as I explained at the time when the theft was discovered—within twenty minutes of receiving the memorandum."

Anthony drew out a file of papers from a drawer of his desk, and turned them over slowly.

"I see you say in your original complaint against Catesby—made while I was away in Egypt—that you were not sure of the exact time when you gave him the memorandum and orders to take over the TNT."

"I remember now, though. Grim's question brought the facts to mind."

"You're ready to swear to it now at the court martial?"

"Certainly."

"Very well. Have Catesby rearrested. Is there anything else, Grim?"

"The *iblis*, sir. I interviewed him last night."

"The deuce you did!"

"I've evidence enough against him to call for his arrest on military grounds."

"All right. I'll sign a warrant. Do you know where he is?"

"Not at the moment."

"Are you sure we can convict him?"

"Perfectly."

Without more ado Anthony began to fill out a regulation form.

"Better describe him as 'a person unknown—colored—believed to be a leper—accused of plotting to loot the military camp.' There."

He handed it to Jim. The printed portion was couched in the customary legal verbiage intended to convey the meaning without too formal crudity, that the prisoner should be caught, brought in and delivered alive or dead.

Jim put it in his pocket and went to his tent to sleep until late afternoon. Brigadier-General Jenkins, on the other hand, after restating his opinion of the Zionists for Aaronsohn's benefit, marched down to the place where they confined civilian prisoners, to see Charkas alone and drill him in his part. A very cautious, forehanded brigadier was Albert Jenkins, although given to expressing triumph rather sooner than was wise.

He had the ill taste to laugh aloud on his way back, as he passed Catesby in his tent, this time with two armed sentries standing on guard in front of it.

CHAPTER XIII

"The chain's complete."

IT WAS growing dark when Jim emerged from his tent feeling less at ease than he cared to admit to himself. A note had come from Catesby, who was now to all intents and purposes incommunicado, to the effect that from five until six on the evening of the third he had been inquiring, at Jenkins' verbal request, into an accident that had taken place several days previously. A civilian had had his leg broken by a gun-wheel, and civilian witnesses had been difficult to find; but he had unearthed one, and was questioning him at the time when Jenkins pretended he had given the order about the TNT. Now he could not find the man again to prove the fact.

Jim had the note in his hand. As Catesby's next friend he had the right to visit him in any circumstances, just as a lawyer may go to his client in jail.

Things looked pretty bad at the moment. Bull-buffalo Jenkins was caught in a net of lies, certainly; but like many another buffalo before him he was going to be able to blunder out of it by brute force unless the unexpected happened. But it always does.

There seems to be a natural law that when chicanery has reached a certain stage of ripeness, and the elements of decency begin to rebel, all the clews required to link the crimes with the criminal appear on the surface one by one, almost exactly as when two chemicals are mixed

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and one of them disintegrates. Examination of the career of any criminal or of any public scandal will confirm the phenomenon.

It is easy to talk airily of luck and coincidence. Luck is an element of crime and loose thinking. The fact is that honest persistency sets natural laws to working, with the result, for instance, that an inventor on the trail of one idea discovers an entirely different one that he never dreamed of; a general, wholly bent on a definite, ably worked-out line of strategy discovers an unexpected flaw in the enemy's design that he would have missed if his own arrangements had been careless. There is no luck about it. It is law.

So, although Jim was surprized and rather annoyed at the moment, he stumbled that minute on his clew. Aaronsohn, the vitriolic journalist in gold-rimmed glasses, was sitting outside the tent on a camp-stool, a hand on either knee in an attitude of suppressed impatience. He got to his feet the instant Jim appeared.

"You are Major Grim, I think. I would like to talk to you."

"I'm in a hurry," Jim warned him.

"I am not. Why not do your errand and I will wait here for you? I have waited already two hours. You were asleep and I did not care to disturb you."

"Something important, eh?"

"To me, yes. To you, perhaps not."

"All right. Wait in my tent. Help yourself to cigarets, and I'll be right back."

Instead of going to Catesby as he had intended, Jim went straight to the hospital tent, where he found Narayan Singh sitting on the end of the cot in glowering impatience.

"Have you slept?" he asked him.

"Ask that orderly, *sahib*."

Jim beckoned the orderly and put the question.

"Hah! Never was such a sleeper! He has snored so for five hours on end that the very tent-poles shook, and I had to wake him twice lest the other patients get out of bed to murder him."

Jim laughed and went to find the doctor.

"Is Narayan Singh fit to be discharged?" he asked.

"No, but I'll discharge him like a shot. Most Sikhs enjoy a short spell in hospital, but that man has more excuses for discharging him than a porcupine has bristles. He's an interesting specimen, and not badly hurt; three days would see him as right as a trivet. I've talked with him on and off for about three hours just for the fun of it."

"Hasn't he slept at all?"

"Not much. But you know what Sikhs are; they can go without sleep for a tremendous time, and make it up afterwards. The last excuse he tried on me was a story that his father died of hydrophobia because he couldn't stand hospital environment at night, and he suggested the disease might be hereditary.

"Sure, I'll let him out—a liar like that deserves anything. Tell him to come back and have his head dressed again after he has seen the lady."

Outside between the tents Jim gave Narayan Singh his warrant to arrest the *iblis*.

"Have you any idea where to look for him?" he asked.

"Surely, *sahib*. That Suliman played a game with other young sprouts of wickedness outside the place where I lay. Afterwards they talked until Suliman grew sleepy and went off with all their money.

"They told the gossip of the lines: how certain men had seen the *iblis* cross the railway line this morning, but were afraid to interfere with him. He was heading due east. I think, *sahib*, he will dance again tonight to summon thieves and learn from them how much has happened. If he does——!"

"You'd better take some men with you."

"Aye, *sahib*—four men if I may choose them."

"Will you go in disguise?"

"Not I! We will take rifles with bayonets, wear our uniforms and bring back that *iblis* in the name of a Sikh, whose head is no proper target for roof-stones. There is honor involved."

"All right."

Jim made arrangements for Narayan Singh to have the selection of four volunteers, and got written permits for them all to leave camp after dark. Then he returned to Aaronsohn.

THE Zionist had lit the lamp and was reading a Hebrew magazine in Jim's chair with that peculiar manner of armed intensity that characterizes the thinkers of the movement. His Vandyke beard and thin, Semitic nose,

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and a narrow shawl thrown loosely over his shoulders, made him look in that uncertain light like one of the statesmen-priests who used to intrigue in medieval history.

"Now I'm at your service."

"I have come to appeal to you as a fellow-American, Major Grim."

"Don't forget I'm in British uniform."

"I am also an American, as it were in service under British rules and regulations."

"The positions seem different to me. However——"

"You are the only American in British uniform to whom I can appeal. I am not under arrest for the present. They have spared me that indignity, although I understand that General Jenkins demanded it.

"I am charged with plotting to steal British rifles, and with hiding them under the floor of our store-shed, where they were discovered this morning by a Captain Ticknor. Now I know nothing about those rifles. We have never used that space beneath the floor. We only hire the place.

"I have no notion how the rifles got there; how should I have? I am only quite sure that no Zionist had a hand in it, for I know what every Zionist in Ludd has been doing all the time. But how can I prove it?

"I am told you exposed a plot against Zionists in Jerusalem. Will you help us now?"

Jim sat down on the bed and smiled. Aaronsohn took the smile for mere politeness covering hesitation, and turned loose all his persuasive power.

"Whatever your racial prejudices, Major Grim, the predicament we Zionists are placed in surely must appeal to you. On the one hand the British Government promises us everything—a national home for Jews in Palestine—assistance—fair play; and some of their officers try to make good that promise. I give them full credit. They haven't much intelligence from our point of view, but they act according to their lights.

"On the other hand some of the officers, General Jenkins among them, stop at nothing to put us in a bad light, and do everything within their power to handicap us in every way. Such men have even less intelligence than the others, but their official position gives them opportunity."

"The British are not all fools," said Jim.

"That is after all a matter of opinion. Certainly some of them are just according to their lights; but it is that very sense of justice that I dread in this instance.

"General Anthony will order a court martial on me and a handful of others. All the officers who are anti-Zionist will exert themselves to discover circumstantial evidence against us. We have none whatever——"

"Oh, yes, you have," said Jim.

"But what? I have been allowed to visit the place since the discovery, and it is true that it can be shown that the rifles were carried in through a door connecting with a place next door that is owned by Arabs.

"But they will answer, 'What does that prove?' Only that we paid Arabs to do the stealing for us! I am told that Ibrahim Charkas, who is the worst kind of criminal, will swear that we Zionists paid him."

"Don't worry about that," said Jim. "I think I know enough to prick that bubble. I'll provide you with some evidence when the time comes."

"But what? What do you know? Tell me—I insist."

"It 'ud take too long," said Jim. "Besides, the value of what I know largely depends on my discovering something else that seems to have nothing to do with it. I'm interested in that just now. I'm at my wits' end, and want time to think."

"Let me try to help you. We will help each other."

"You can't help."

"How do you know? State the case and try me."

"I must find an Arab named Sayed Haurani, who was talking to Captain Catesby half-way between the station and the town on the afternoon of the third between five and six o'clock. I need him in a hurry."

Aaronsohn looked startled.

"I suppose you have orders to gather further evidence against Zionists?" he asked acidly.

"No."

It was Jim's turn to sit up and take notice.

"Is Sayed Haurani a Zionist? Of course he isn't. But what d'you know of him?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"To save Captain Catesby from being cashiered on a false charge."

"Sayed Haurani was my messenger. I

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dismissed him on that occasion for returning an hour late from the station, because I disbelieved his story."

Jim lay back on the bed and threw his legs in the air.

"Can you find him?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"Tonight?"

"Yes."

"The chain's complete! Go and find him. Produce him at eight o'clock tomorrow morning in General Anthony's office and the world's your oyster!"

"I have no desire to eat a world on the half-shell, Major Grim."

"You shall have Jenkins' head on a salver!"

"Pardon me, I am not Salome."

"What in thunder could a man want more than that? Go on, Aaronsohn—find your man! Produce him at eight A. M. and leave the rest to me."

In vain Aaronsohn coaxed, cajoled and persuaded. Jim shut up like a clam; but his eyes betrayed such infinite enjoyment that even Aaronsohn at last took comfort from it and went away to find the discharged messenger.

THE minute he had gone, Jim went over to Catesby's tent and called out to him, standing between the sentries rather than run the risk of stirring Jenkins any further by being seen entering the tent.

"All right, old son, you're cleared. Be at headquarters at eight o'clock. They'll fetch you anyhow."

"What's happened?"

"Good news, that's all. Go to sleep and dream about promotion."

From there he went straight to General Anthony, who looked worried. He called Jim into an inner room and shut the door.

"What's at the bottom of all this, Grim? Have you any idea?

"It looks to me as if Jenkins is going to get away with murder once again. He has got the whole camp by the ears. We shall have the provost-marshal sending in his resignation next. After that I suppose there'll be a decoration sent out from home for me to pin on Jenkins! —— it, the man's luck is unbelievable!"

Jim put his tongue in his cheek.

"I've not a word to say against him, sir!"

"What have you come here for, then?"

"Merely to suggest that if you think both cases are sufficiently important you might order a preliminary hearing first thing tomorrow morning—all witnesses to be present as a matter of fair play."

"Why? Have you got something?"

"I'd like to see Jenkins given an early chance to take all the credit to himself. Maybe he deserves it," Jim answered.

"Oh! Very well. By gad, Grim, if you let Jenkins get away with this I'll have you sent back to America. You think Catesby ought to have a hearing too tomorrow morning, eh?"

"He ought to come first, sir."

"Yes, he has the right to that. What else?"

"Nothing else. If you'll issue the necessary orders, sir, I know of nothing that need spoil your appetite for dinner or your sleep tonight."

"That so? Ahem! Somebody blundered, eh?"

"Good night, sir."

ANTHONY'S quarters were on rising ground. Jim went to the summit of the hill, and sat there watching the moon rise.

After a while he saw in the distance a speck of naked humanity against the moon's disk, and watched it dance. It could be only the *iblis*. He watched until it disappeared as suddenly as it had come; then went to dinner and told red-man stories to the mess.

CHAPTER XIV

"Proceed with the case."

NEXT morning the office at G. H. Q. was crowded, for the provost-marshal was there with all his prisoners; and there were a score of witnesses in addition, to say nothing of Brigadier Jenkins in his glory, and Aaronsohn, who was half-way between prisoner and witness. The latter had a nondescript, rebellious-looking Arab beside him, who had had to be bribed to come at all.

Catesby was sitting in a corner by himself, in theoretical charge of two sentries, who stayed outside the office door.

Anthony came in punctual to the second.

"Major Grim here?"

To Jenkins' fidgety disgust Jim was busy talking to Charkas over against the wall.

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"I think he's too busy interfering with witnesses to answer his name," snapped the brigadier.

"Major Grim!"

"Yes, sir."

"What were you doing over there?"

"Cautioning a prisoner to tell the truth for his own sake."

"Ahem! I understand you appear for Captain Catesby? You want the case heard?"

"If you please."

"I object to that," said Jenkins. "Captain Catesby is an important witness in the next case."

"I will invite comment from you at the proper time, general," said Anthony without looking up. "Call the prisoner."

Catesby marched up and faced the desk.

"Then I want the room cleared," Jenkins blustered.

"I want all my witnesses, including Charkas, in the room for the present," Jim said quietly.

"I particularly want Charkas out of the room," insisted Jenkins. "He has got nothing to do with this case."

"Has he?" asked Anthony.

"Yes, sir," answered Jim.

"The defense is within its rights," said Anthony.

And Jenkins, not exactly knowing why, but intuitively sensing disaster, turned about three shades redder in the face.

"I'm ready to hear what you have to say, general," Anthony announced; and Jenkins opened fire on the unhappy Catesby, charging him first with culpable neglect and disobedience to orders in permitting two tons of TNT to be stolen from a truck, and secondly with felony in having given the railway memorandum to Charkas, enabling him to steal the stuff.

Also with being an accessory to a felony before and after the fact, and with conduct in general unbecoming to an officer and a gentleman.

At that point Jim produced the railway memorandum and laid it on the table.

"In case of need I may ask to have it examined for finger-prints," he said. "I expect to be able to prove that those of Captain Catesby are not on it, whereas those of General Jenkins and Ibrahim Charkas are. But that may not be necessary."

"Are you making any implication?" demanded Jenkins.

"No, sir."

"Proceed with the case," commanded Anthony.

Jenkins had a peroration all prepared; he was constitutionally incapable of doing anything without calling attention to his own virtues, and he dissertated at length on the high calling of an officer until Anthony cut him short and demanded evidence.

Jenkins bit his mustache, and swore under his breath.

"My charge in itself is evidence," he said, "sufficient evidence to hold the prisoner. I am withholding my chief witness for the next case."

"You mean that you appear as prosecutor and witness?" asked Anthony.

"Yes—on the charge of culpable negligence."

"I'm willing that charge should be taken first by itself," said Jim, and Jenkins looked vastly relieved and nodded to him.

"Go on oath if you're a witness," ordered Anthony, and Jenkins duly kissed the well-worn Testament.

"Now go ahead. I'll write down your evidence."

JENKINS described then in great detail as to his own feelings in the matter, but vaguely as to time, how he had given orders to Catesby on the evening of the third to go and take charge of the TNT, which was subsequently stolen and recovered in Jerusalem.

"And I ask," he said, "that the prisoner be held for court martial on this charge, and that the other charges be taken tomorrow."

"Certainly not," said Anthony. "Any questions, Major Grim?"

Jim pinned Jenkins down to giving the exact time—first, however, getting him to boast about his excellent memory. Driven to it, Jenkins swore on oath that he had given the memorandum to Catesby shortly after five o'clock on the afternoon of the third.

"You gave it into his hand?"

"Yes."

"You swear to that?"

"Certainly."

Jim put up Catesby, who told a perfectly straight story of having questioned a man named Sayed Haurani for an hour, beginning before five o'clock, at a point

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more than a mile away from Jenkins' office, and by Jenkins' orders on that date.

Jenkins reserved cross-examination. With his eye on Charkas, whose face was a picture of indecision and mixed emotions, Jim called Sayed Haurani. The man identified Catesby and confirmed his story in all particulars.

Jenkins tried to break down the story by bullying the witness, but failed. The man was insolently confident.

"I ask to have the hearing postponed until I can look up this man's antecedents," said Jenkins. "He's an obvious liar. This is what comes of turning an accused officer loose to suborn evidence in the bazaar."

Anthony waved the objection aside, and Jenkins grew still more uncomfortable.

"Either this witness is committing perjury, or I did," he blustered. "It's no joking matter."

"Obviously," said Anthony, again without looking up. "Call your next witness, if you have one, Major Grim."

Then Aaronsohn stood up before the desk and confirmed Sayed Haurani's evidence, explaining how he had disbelieved the man at the time and had dismissed him for returning from the station late. He gave the Arab a high character for everything except discipline, describing him as an insolently disobedient man, who did not trouble himself to lie about things as a rule, but shook off rebuke with an air of bold indifference.

At last Anthony began to look very hard at Jenkins, who avoided his gaze by pretending to look about the room for some one who was not there. Jim had his eye on Charkas. A great deal depended now on the effect that what had gone before had had on Charkas.

"Perhaps you'd like to reexamine General Jenkins yourself sir?" he asked Anthony.

Anthony took the cue, and grilled the brigadier on each point of his evidence, reducing him at last to a state of boiling anger bordering on insubordination.

"If I'm charged with lying on oath I'd like to know it," he snapped.

"Stand down, sir," ordered Anthony.

"Ibrahim Charkas," ordered Jim.

He met Charkas' eye and glanced meaningly at Jenkins, but there was no need. The Arab had seen which way the cat was jumping, and decided there was more profit for himself in contributing to Jenkins' downfall than in trying to support him.

He could not tell the truth, of course; that would have been too much to expect of him. But he blurted out the whole story of the plot to ruin the Zionists, and accused Jenkins of having not only suggested it but of having paid for it as well. And instead of admitting the theft of the TNT memorandum, he accused Jenkins of having given it to him.

THAT was about enough for that morning. It was only a preliminary hearing, not a court martial.

Anthony decided to postpone the hearing of the case against Charkas and the other thieves. He dismissed the charges against Catesby, entering against them the two words "honorably discharged" for future reference. The two soldiers who had stood guard over Catesby were then formally transferred to "Jinks," who marched off to his own tent a prisoner.

Anthony had turned to Aaronsohn to tell him that pending the trial of the thieves there would be no restraint on his movements or implication against him, when there was a disturbance at the door. A sentry came in to explain.

"Admit him," said Anthony, and in marched Narayan Singh, with his uniform in shreds and the marks of a strenuous fight all over him.

He was bleeding slightly in one or two places, and one eye was nearly closed.

"Well?" demanded Anthony. "What does this mean?"

"The *iblis*, *sahib*."

"What of him?"

"I took four men and stalked him all through the night. He was dancing again. We came up with him and he ran. We followed. He ran very fast, skipping like a he goat, but the moon favored us and we kept him in view.

"He came to bay at last in a *nullah*, and we called on him to surrender. He did not answer, but started to make magic to frighten us, waving with his arms thus—and thus. I gave the order to make him prisoner. So we left our rifles in charge of one man, and four of us rushed in to seize him."

"And didn't find it so easy, eh?"

"Nay, *sahib*, far from easy. He fought as I have never known a man to fight. He

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was stronger than a leopard. He struck with hands and feet—bit with his teeth—and all but tore the four of us limb from limb. And the man who held the rifles could not shoot because of the darkness and the risk of killing one of us. At last he had three of us senseless, but I broke loose from his hold and limped back for my rifle."

"Senseless, eh? Where are they now?"

"In hospital, general *sahib*. They were able to crawl home."

"You haven't told us where the *iblis* is," said Jim.

"Safe in *jehannum, sahib*."

"Dead, d'you mean?" asked Anthony. "How?"

"He died a natural death, general *sahib*."

"What—fell dead, d'you mean? Apoplexy—over-exertion or something?"

"Nay, *sahib*; my bayonet took him under the ribs and so upwards. He was a good fighter. The account is square between us."

"Where's the body? Did you leave it there?"

"Nay, general *sahib*. It says on the paper I should bring the prisoner in. We dragged it all the way between us, taking turns. The *dakitar sahib* says it weighs two hundred pounds."

"Dismiss, then. Go and get your wounds dressed," ordered Anthony.

The Shell-Back

by Henry Leverage

Author of "The Coast of Azure," "Gyved," etc.

OLD MARLIN would sit and look at her for hours——

Roaring Kate, men called her—she who kept a sailors' boarding-house where East Street meets with Mission on San Francisco's water-front, a region of sudden death, surprize, lurching men and vain regrets.

Kate tolerated Old Marlin; he did the light chores, chopped wood, made the beds, wove the mats and filled the place, at times, with a whaling chantey—pitched in false key—a sodden thing called, "Who'll Pay Paddy Doyle for his Boots?"

Old Marlin was not exactly a woman's man; so Kate, one night when she was surly from water-front booze, gave him a hard look, appraised his matted beard and tattooed hands, then called on a young crimp named Goslin to make way with the ancient salt—who had stayed too long ashore.

Goslin, who had Roaring Kate's favor, made haste to rid the boarding-house of Old Marlin. His method was simple, effective; whisky was scarce and hard to get; nevertheless Goslin obtained a quart, emptied it down Old Marlin's willing throat, led the tipsy shell-back water-front-ward and up-heeled him into the yawning forecastle of the steam packet, *Kotzebue*, destined, that morning when the tide turned, for Nome and farther points north.

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Old Marlin's awakening was in the midst of a chant—a requiem to a fast-fading shore. Green-hands, dock rats, apprentices, cluttered the modern forecastle of the steam packet, which, being crank and overloaded, pitched, tossed and churned a yeasty passage through the long rollers of the North Pacific.

The belching bitterness of Goslin's water-front booze sickened Old Marlin's thoughts. He squinted through the forecastle's gloom, saw a pale light over a barrel, a row of well-filled bunks, and heard—

"Aye, lad?"

"I'm 'ere."

"Douse th' glim."

"Where's m' boots?"

"Stow yer jaw—yu bloodsucker!"

"Shut hup, you crimp! Let a better man 'ave 'is sleep."

"A better man, ye say! I've no doubt ye'll come on deck an' tell m' that?"

"On deck! Why you Scotch dog, you're afraid ov th' deck. Get-out-o' m' way!"

Old Marlin rolled in his bunk, pressed his blue-veined nose against an iron plate of the steam packet, and moaned—

"Good ——, I'm at sea again!"

He thought of Roaring Kate, Goslin, the crimp, the warm berth at the sailors' boarding-house—now no more. He awoke to clear consciousness, and action, when the burly form of a mate came down the forecastle ladder and a busy belaying-pin started the round of the forecastle.

"On deck, every Jack o' you! Stir your stumps—this ain't no spar-deck liner!"

Old Marlin avoided, as best he could, the flailing belaying pin, crouched behind the molasses-barrel, and shook himself together, while he watched, through matted lashes, the manner of men pressed aboard the steam packet. A low moan escaped the old salt's lips.

None of the foremast hands bore the stamp of the sea—all had narrow shoulders, puny arms, despairing features.

The mate, impressive in his blue uniform, brass buttons, braid on his sleeves, resembled one of 'Frisco's water-front policemen. Old Marlin heard this officer's retreating steps on the forecastle ladder, rose from behind the molasses-barrel, and crawled into his bunk, where he slept through the early watches.

He was yanked around when a dock-rat offered a chunk of ship's bread.

"Better rise an' shine, matey," said the dock-rat. "Go on up an' blow th' stink off of yous."

Old Marlin thrust his brogans over the edge of the bunk, heard his aged knees creak, groaned, wiped the slime from his eyes, and blinked at his unsavory shipmates.

"This ain't like th' fo'csle I've been in," he said. "This is a can!"

He rapped the iron plate at the side of his bunk, stared upon the deck fittings, the steel mast that came down through the forecastle, then thought of clipper-ship days and the staunch, oak-ribbed whalers that went north to battle with bowheads.

"This is a can," he muttered. "I wish I wuz ashore."

A loud, running laugh went around the forecastle and a boot came hurtling in Old Marlin's direction.

"Take th' air, you bum!"

Old Marlin staggered toward the forecastle-ladder, braced his legs, swung with the slight motion of the ship; then, after a bitter grimace toward the grinning crew, he went on deck.

THE view, from the forecastle-companion, was one to dismay a deep-sea sailor. The steam-packet *Kotzebue*, new that year, resembled a fabricated monstrosity that floated, glided, drove through the waves, without benefit of seamanship. Her funnel belched a sooty volcano, white steam jetted from aft the funnel, an arching bridge, plate-glassed, varnished, marked the position of the police-like mates and official-looking captain.

Old Marlin rimmed the horizon, closed his lashes, fluttered them apart, all save a few sticky hairs, then he stared at the waves that cut aslant a knife-sharp prow. Dizzy they made him—with their ever-running regularity. He felt the throbbing of the *Kotzebue's* engines—the rack of the screw—the tremor that ran through the iron of the ship.

Again he raised his eyes until he marked the three masts of the *Kotzebue*—each aslant, each tapering, each as thin as a pencil, and none had yards or canvas or indication of the old days when ships drove before the pressure of favorable winds.

"A can," he moaned. "A weepin' hooker—like I never sailed on before—so help me!"

Old Marlin's curses were broken when

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there glided from the lee of the fore-deck house, a spry individual whose spindle legs scissored the air and brought a first engineer up to the ancient salt.

"Come with me," said the engineer. "I've no doubt ye can help out. We're short one man in the stoke-hold."

The grim years, which sat so heavily upon Old Marlin's shoulders, caused his gorge to rise; he gulped, looked at the deck, said—

"I'm a blue water sailor."

"A wot?"

Old Marlin struck his breast with a heavy thud. He held out two gnarled hands.

"An A. B.," he explained loudly. "I've sailed th' seas—man an' boy for goin' on fifty years. I can reef, splice, steer. I've been sailmaker, bo'sain, ice pilot an' harpooner." Old Marlin's eyes roamed the sea ahead of the *Kotzebue*. He thrust a hand over the lee rail. "Up there, over there," he muttered, "is where I've been—in th' *Karluk* an' th' *Beluga* an' *Northern Lights*. All whale ships, those."

The Scotch first-engineer of the *Kotzebue* shifted a quid from one leathern cheek to the other. He worked his Adam's apple up and down—an indicator of his emotions which burst fiercely:

"You come below with me! I'll make ye walk! Come down to the stoke-hold, ye miserable lump of dirty slag! Ye shall learn to call me by m' handle."

"Th' stoke-hold?"

"Yea—th' stoke-hold!"

"I can't shovel coal. I'm aged an' have my certificate for th' Seaman's Home. Fifty years, man an' boy, I've steamed an' sailed, an' all that time it was with ships that had spars an' sails an' were well-found."

"So," grinned the Scotch engineer, "ye're behind the time, man. Come with me. There'll be no passin' coal for you. This packet is an oil burner. Ye will have little to do—a wee job smearin' bearings with grease an' the like o' that."

Old Marlin protestingly turned toward the forecastle, took one lurching step, staggered and felt himself gripped by a strong hand. Back he was jerked, despite the struggles of his aged limbs.

"Let go," he told the Scotch engineer. "Come on!"

There was no alternative; Old Marlin went under the bridge, hesitated at the iron-rail around the engine-room companion, then started climbing down while overhead loomed the shadow of the engineer.

"A spanner," said this man, "is too good for the likes o' you. Get over there where you see that oiler. He'll show ye th' grease pot an' th' oil can. Ye start with double pay from what ye got 'fore the mast."

Old Marlin studied the dark face of the oiler, then turned his matted eyes upon the engineer.

"I've never been in an engine-room. Let me go for'ard, where I belong."

The Scot spat to the grating.

"M' name's Mike Monkey, sailor. Ye take long in decidin' to make double pay. Can't ye see I took pity on you?"

The polished rods, flashing in the bright glow of the electrics, the spick-and-span newness of the engine-room, the paint and gold-leaf on the nearest gigantic cylinder, held Old Marlin's eyes like an idol in a temple. He moved his tongue within his unshaven cheeks, started to say something concerning deep-sea wandering son clipper ships, then closed his lips to a determined line.

"This barnacle is in your charge," said the engineer to the grinning oiler. "Give him dungarees an' slippers. He's better off here than on deck."

A WEEK'S work slushing bearings, polishing brass, swabbing up, brought Old Marlin into the semblance of an oiler who avoided the engineers' hard glances, took his mess with the engine-room force in a small "ditty-box," and otherwise managed to exist. Now and then Old Marlin would find an audience—one or two of the 'tween deck crew, who were inclined to listen to the aged salt.

"This is all machinery," Marlin would say. "Machinery—an' not th' things that I know. Where's th' glory ov th' seas—th' tall ships—the staunch whalers? Where are they—they're gone!"

Mike Monkey, the Scotch engineer, heard Old Marlin ranting on his favorite subject one watch, and stopped to listen.

"Yea," said Mike. "Ye may be right—in your own eyes—but give m' steam—three expansion an' oil for the boilers. Give m' that an' I'll walk any ship over the seas. Give me sails—an' I'm at the mercy o' the winds. What do ye know—but what's gone an' almost buried in the past?

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Sails, what? Why sails an' sailin' ships had their day."

The hands of Old Marlin were extended. He pointed to each callous on his palms, lifted his glance to the grinning engineer and replied:

"You speak of steam—but that is a land thing. You have machinery—cranks an' bearings an' engines—but they are man's things. Th' winds—th' trades, th' hurricanes, th' northerners an' th' gales—they talk to you an' pull you on an' they are live things—made by God."

Mike Monkey, who worshiped high-pressure, ranged his eye toward a steam-gauge, spat swiftly, and was off toward the boiler-room where two double-door Scotch boilers were heated by oil jets regulated with hand-valves.

The *Kotzebue* passed the Aleutian Islands, swung her sharp bow into the icy waters of the Bering Sea, and clamped toward Cape Nome, beyond St. Michaels. Ice in the form of floes was met with and after the ice came a muddy sea where the silt from the Yukon fouled the ship's bright plates.

The skipper and his mates had their hands full attending to the green crew, the many passengers, the crank way in which the *Kotzebue* rode the northern waters.

Mike Monkey, whose favorite pastime was baiting Old Marlin, became sarcastic when Nome was reached and the passengers were lightered ashore.

"Ye thought we wouldn't get here," said the first engineer. "Ye see we have—in sixteen days out o' 'Frisco. How long would it take a sailin' ship to make the passage?"

Old Marlin's back grew bowed with thought; he fingered the bunch of oily waste he had been using, dropped it suddenly and lifted his bearded chin until his matted eyes met with Mike Monkey's.

"How long, eh?"

"Yea, how long?"

"Longer than we took," admitted the aged salt. "I have made th' passage—I was ice pilot aboard the *Beluga* then—in seventeen days from San Francisco to Port Clarence, which is a bit nor' ov here. But then we burned no oil or coal—we relied on God's wind an' th' currents ov th' sea—an' we got there."

"Did you get back?"

"Th' *Beluga* was lost," confessed Old Marlin. "Crushed in th' Arctic. We were nipped 'tother side ov East Cape."

"She had no steam?"

"No, sir!"

Mike Monkey had been raised on the banks of the Clyde where steam was a power unto itself. He felt pity for Old Marlin, the whaler.

"Ye are so far behind the times," said the first engineer, "ye belong to the Ark Age. Wot use are ye aboard this packet?"

"If this ship had sails an' masts an' wood instead of iron, you would see what use I am. I sailed, fifty years, man an' boy——"

"Put a gasket on your jaw gear. Get busy!"

The engineer was off attending to his many duties, for the *Kotzebue* was to leave Nome that evening. It was said aboard the ship that the skipper intended passing through Bering Strait and would attempt to secure a cargo of furs, whale-bone and trade-stuffs at Cape Lisburne.

Old Marlin went on deck when the *Kotzebue* sheered from the land, picked up speed and drove toward Siberia in Asia. The ancient salt stood by the hand-rail, around the engine-room-hatch, and gulped the Bering breeze which was laden with remembered odors. He sensed whale-slick, ice and a coming nip of frost.

THE ship's engines purred almost silently; a lone lookout stood on the forecastle head; the wake, astern, stretched into the verging shadow of tundra and the low Alaskan shore. Old Marlin stroked his gray-streaked beard, thought of Roaring Kate and Goslin—who had shanghaied him. There came to him other thoughts—the modern ship, the Scotch engineer whose tongue was bitter—the uselessness of a life in the engine-room.

A frowzy head appeared, framed in the forecastle hatch; and a cutting laugh came down the ship's fore-deck. Another head joined with the first. Two of Old Marlin's former bunk-mates were jeering at him openly. They both were green hands from 'Frisco's dingy streets.

"Get where you belong!" one shouted.

Old Marlin's fingers closed upon his uncombed beard, he swayed with the motion of the ship, glared at the grinning men, swung his head away and took a long look at the sea. Then he went below and climbed into a narrow bunk which reeked from oil and grease.

It came to the aged salt, before he fell

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into sleep, that the new ship, the green hands, the practical Scotch engineer and the gold-laced captain were taking unknown chances in an unknown ocean. There was much floe ice in the Arctic and many stouter ships than the *Kotzebue* had laid gaunt ribs upon the tundra or gone down in the grim nip of the northern pack. It was the wild season of the year—currents, winds, gales tore around the stark rocks within the Strait.

Old Marlin, shaking his head with apprehension, went about his duties in the engine-room, and now and then told his fears to his mates.

"It's a bad season," he said. "Suppose we're crushed in this can? If we're crushed—we'll all go down before you could say Jack Robinson."

Mike Monkey overheard Old Marlin.

"Ye sea lawyer!" shouted the Scotch engineer. "Go aft an' crawl through the shaft-alley. One would think ye came aboard wi' Davy Jones' hammer. Ye quit knockin' this fine packet!"

The *Kotzebue*, after a brief struggle with the ice, reached East Cape, Siberia, unloaded stores for the on-shore whalers, then entered the dangerous waters of the Arctic. A feeling of fear struck through each green hand's breast; the mates talked in whispers; Mike Monkey cursed his engine-room force and called them cowards, all save Old Marlin, who kept out of the Scot's sight.

Marlin gained the deck, now and then, stared at the angry sea, squinted toward the north where the glint of horizon-low ice showed distinctly. He shook his head dolefully.

The steel ship, with its thin plates, crank stearing-gear, and oil burning boilers was as much out of place in the Arctic as a tropical canoe. There was no chance of replenishing the oil in case of accidents or delay—the skipper had never before steamed or sailed past Bering Strait—the season looked hostile, for gales were impending.

One such gale—a northerner—came when the *Kotzebue* lay off Cape Lisburne. The cargo of stores and trade stuff was rapidly unloaded, and taken ashore in long boats. A final blast of the packet's whistle announced a hurried flight back to safer waters. All steam was crowded through the engines—the ship throbbed, struck into the wind, sheered and ran for it.

Ice appeared almost magically. Old Marlin, crouched at the rail, looked toward the glass-plated bridge where stood the anxious skipper and his mates.

"You got into it—now get out of it," muttered the ancient salt.

The ship ground through young floes, reached a tougher spot, staggered, then Old Marlin heard the clang of the engine-room telegraph signaling reverse.

A staggering shock almost split the *Kotzebue;* hoary ice loomed to starboard and port; the wind, never a gentle thing in those waters, milled and freshened to a full gale.

THROUGH the menace, dodging, backing, the packet drove toward an open lane which stretched north and east. Old Marlin climbed upon his bunk, wiped the closed port-hole glass clean with his tattered sleeve, and looked upon a scene of utter desolation. Ice and more ice, pinnacle, spire, wide fields, lay about the ship.

The aged salt knew the indications; he braced his knees and stared over shoulder. A glow from the oil-fed furnaces illuminated the engine-room and brought out shadowy details of fear-stricken men driven to desperation by the predicament the skipper had forced the ship in.

Mike Monkey, stripped to the waist, brandishing a Stillson wrench, was overseeing an almost hopeless task of mending a broken steam-pipe. A cry came from the boiler-room—stokers crawled through the bulkhead door—the ship quivered, climbed a shelf of ice, canted dangerously, then righted sullenly, as some of her plates were ripped open. A second shout came from the boiler-room when an oiler emerged surrounded by steam, and addressed Mike Monkey—

"Your —— tanks have been punctured from the outside!"

"Wot?" Mike Monkey poised the Stillson wrench over the frightened oiler's head.

"Yes, they're both leaked out—starboard an' port. This packet is what I said it was—a hell-ship! You won't have any oil for th' boilers."

Old Marlin prayed for sails and the good old days of staunch ships adapted to buck the ice.

A series of hoarse orders, scuffling feet, blows, followed the oiler's announcement. Men ran forward, waded through water

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that came aboard through the rifts in the plates and tanks, then were driven back to the engine-room when the *Kotzebue's* bow lifted upon a vast expanse of ice.

The packet hung there, like the beam of a scales. Mike Monkey climbed to the deck, consulted with the skipper, shouted down the engine-room companion for sledge-hammers, rivets, crow-bars and mattresses.

"We'll mend the holes in the tanks an' plates while we're out of water!" he grinned. "Come on, ye scum!"

The side plates of the *Kotzebue*, where ice had punctured, were partly patched, stuffed with mattresses, seamed-shut by many heavy sledge blows. Some of the rivet holes leaked—others held along the waterline.

A crash sounded within the field of ice—an open lane appeared—the *Kotzebue* began sliding into deep water. Mike Monkey abandoned his efforts to close the plates and clambered aboard, followed by his men. The ship went into the Arctic. It floated, leaking, stricken.

Hand-pumps were rigged in the engine-room; their clank drowned out all sound of distress and helped to hold the inrushing water from foundering the ship.

Old Marlin leaned upon a pump-handle, eyed the hose that ran upward through the engine-room hatch, and heard a frightened voice calling down the engine-room tube:

"Give us more steam on the engines. I've rang twice! We're not making any headway—we're drifting back."

Mike Monkey drove the oiler forward through the bulkhead door and followed after him. Old Marlin tremblingly put on a dungaree jacket, loosened his shoe-laces, pulled on his shoes, and joined the force of engineers and wipers who swayed on the gratings, momentarily expecting to hear the command to abandon ship.

A panic suddenly seized the engine-room force; a wiper started climbing the ladder that led to the deck; another followed him. Mike Monkey crawled into the engine-room, sprang to his feet and called to the vanishing wiper—

"Come down, ye scum, ye clinker rat!"

The wiper's answer was to turn a fear-blanched face downward, then point upward with a shaking hand. Particles of ice covered the hatch's opening; snow came down and hissed when it struck the engine's cylinders. The *Kotzebue* rolled, righted, lunged on and spun in the grip of an icy current which carried it rapidly eastward. Old Marlin followed Mike Monkey up the engine-room-ladder and stood at the side of the Scot when they both reached the deck.

The scene, darkened by nightfall, was one to quail the stoutest of hearts. A whimpering wind, tempered to the dagger point, whined and swept athwart the ship and open sea. Waves lipped the rails, frosted the scuppers, came aboard and drenched the howling crew, gathered, for protection, at the break of the forepeak.

"Now is the time for God an' sailors," said the old salt into the first engineer's ear.

MIKE MONKEY shivered, gathered his thin jacket about his spare bones, then turned to Old Marlin.

"Wot are ye croakin' about?"

"It seems to me, sir," answered the ancient seaman, simply, "that with your oil gone an' th' ship bein' driven east, that it's time for prayers. I wish I was on a sailin' vessel. Then we could work south an' west."

The engineer dashed across the deck, swung up the bridge-ladder, and confronted the irate skipper who had given up hope of gaining headway speed from the packet's slow-turning engines. Old Marlin watched the two men in angry argument. Fists were raised; Mike Monkey turned away his head, spat to the bridge-deck, and peered sharply into the smother of snow, ice and fog that wrapped the ship.

He climbed down the ladder and disappeared through the engine-room-companion. Old Marlin was overlooked in the panic which seized the members of the *Kotzebue's* crew—the sailor went about the deck, lifted his matted beard, studied the dark sky, then braced himself aft the deck-house where there was some slight shelter. A warning shout, at daybreak, indicated that the packet's engines had stopped altogether. The bow swung when the ship lost headway and drifted within floes that dotted a slightly heaving ocean.

A mate, garbed in blue, seized Old Marlin's shoulder and hurled him toward the engine-room hatch.

"Get down to the hand-pumps! You're useless on deck!"

"I'm th' only A. B. you've got," said Old Marlin staunchly.

"The —— you say!" added the mate. "What's th' matter with me?"

The salt crawled below, resolved to wash

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his hands of the voyage, which, by every indication, was bound to end disastrously.

Mike Monkey and his gang were attempting to find some oil aboard the ship, with which to feed the furnaces. Both starboard and port tanks, located beneath the deck, near the water-line, were dry. Old Marlin watched the struggles of the engine-room force, got out of the way by crawling in his bunk where he reclined with his head pillowed on both tattooed hands. He sensed, as time passed, a period of calm seas where the *Kotzebue* floated within a lane of open water.

The conversation between the first engineer and the captain, held through the voice tube, was bitter.

"There's not a wee bit of oil down here!" shouted Mike Monkey. "A've tried everythin', skipper."

"—— you!" came back. "We're doomed! This ice will close in any hour. If it closes—we're nipped."

An oiler approached Mike Monkey and suggested ripping out the few deck planks of the ship and feeding them to the furnaces. Mike Monkey glared at him.

"The boilers are cold now. D'ye think there's wood enough aboard to build a hundred an' twenty pounds o' steam?"

"N——o," admitted the oiler.

Old Marlin threw his brogans over the edge of the bunk, and, avoiding the dancing first engineer, climbed to the deck where he stood regarding the fairly calm water about the ship.

Ice showed to the north and east—a menace which might come down any time the wind freshened. Old Marlin studied the sky, walked to the rail, gazed overside, braced his shoulders suddenly, and, despite the rules governing seamen and engine-room men, climbed to the bridge where he confronted the crushed skipper.

"I've sailed these seas," began the anxious salt, "for many seasons. You must get out of this lane within twenty-four hours—otherwise, skipper, all hands are lost. This ship is a can. It'll sink like a tin bucket—once it's crushed."

"How in —— am I going to get out of here? The —— owners didn't furnish a rag of a sail. Th' engineer reports no oil and th' seams leakin'."

Old Marlin stroked his matted beard. He turned and pointed to leeward where an oily substance floated upon the water.

"See that?" he asked the skipper.

"See it? Yes! What of it?"

"That's whale slick."

"Do you think, you fool, that we can scum it up an' feed it to the furnaces?"

"No, I didn't think that, skipper. But if you'll let me take charge of things I can get oil. I want a crew of ten men, harpoons, line, two boats, an' I'll lower away."

"For what?"

"Bowhead whales. They're always thick—when you see whale slick. I marked one spout—not a bell ago—an' there's others."

The captain of the *Kotzebue* reached for the voice-tube and summoned the first engineer to the bridge. Mike Monkey heard Old Marlin repeat his proposition to supply oil for the furnaces.

"How are ye goin' to fry the blubber out?" asked the Scot shrewdly.

"A try pot can be built on th' fo'cas'le deck or aft th' foremast. There's wood enough to fry out fifty barrels of good whale oil—maybe a little more."

"Fifty barrels will save our lives!" exclaimed Mike Monkey.

"Then we'll get it," said Old Marlin.

THE captain nodded; he leaned over the bridge and shouted orders. Old Marlin went forward and down into the hold. A mate assisted him in getting out ten ship-lengths of hemp-line. Harpoons were improvised by Mike Monkey, and lances were beaten from boiler-stays. Two boats lowered, one in charge of Old Marlin, the other commanded by the captain. Fortunately the sea held calm.

It was at the end of a long Arctic day when Old Marlin, after three attempts and the loss of much line through snarling, succeeded in fastening to a huge right-whale that up-flukes and started towing the long-boat toward the ice. The line was hauled in, Old Marlin poised on the bow and lanced, many times, the leviathan beneath the keel. Blood spouted, black-skin was revealed, the whale milled, turned over, and floated upon the surface.

It was towed to the *Kotzebue*, where Old Marlin showed his mates how to cut the blubber from the carcass. All night the crew worked with the nipping frost numbing their hands. Daybreak, at four bells, found Mike Monkey ready with a try pot improvised from a spare tank and boiler tubes. A fire was started and fed with deck

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planks, crates, life-preservers, part of a boat smashed that day in the whale-hunt.

Oil, of a thick consistency, began flowing down to a repaired tank. Mike Monkey danced upon the engine-room gratings and gave orders to husband this oil as it it were his own life blood.

"Ye muckers!" he shouted. "Keep th' try pot boilin' for two hours an' we've got fuel enough to take us out o' this wicked sea! Yea, we'll have enough to go some distance down th' Bering—where there's a chance to gain more oil from ships."

The *Kotzebue* lay within the open sea all that day and most of the day that followed. Then there came, after Old Marlin had succeeded in trying-out a large part of the blubber, a northeaster which brought floes upon the distant horizon.

Mike Monkey got steam on his engines—the single screw turned fifty revolutions a minute—this was increased to sixty revolutions. The ship sheered from the danger, the whale's carcass was allowed to drift astern, pieces of half-boiled blubber were crammed in the furnaces alongside the oil-feed pipes.

Bering Strait was sighted, gained, and left behind, while astern of the fast-driving ship roared the baffled north pack—too late to nip the *Kotzebue*.

Old Marlin, still busy directing the crew how to fry out blubber, was ordered to the bridge and afterward the captain led him into a snug cabin where sat Mike Monkey and two grease-incrusted mates.

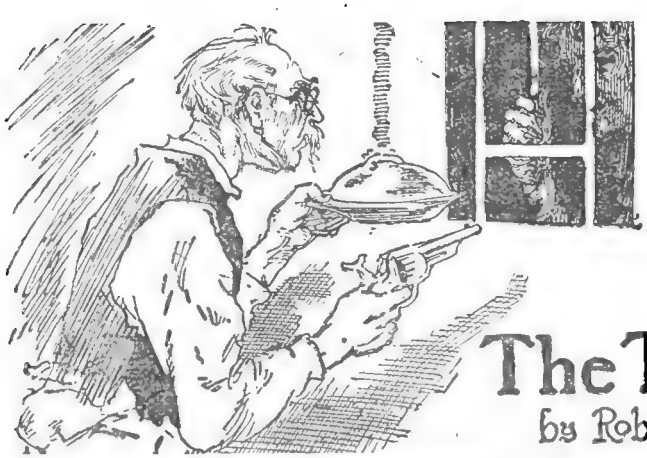
A meal lay before these three men—such a meal as Old Marlin had never tasted. He sat down at the captain's orders, took a brimming glass of trade-gin which Mike Monkey passed over, eyed, through his matted lashes, the first engineer, and there passed all feeling of rancor.

"We'll drink," gulped Mike, "to that idea about gettin' oil from a wicked sea."

The captain of the *Kotzebue* struck Old Marlin on the back.

"—— no!" he roared. "We'll drink to th' only sailor aboard this ship."

Old Marlin bowed his whiskered face and fell to eating ravenously.



The Tail-Ender

by Robert J. Horton

Author of "The Claw on Queen's Hill," "A He-Man Platform," etc.

STETON straightened in the saddle, pulled his hat forward a bit to shade his eyes better and stared with newly awakened interest across the sun-bathed reaches of prairie before him to where a cloud of dust swirled in the half-hearted breeze of the open country's noonday.

A number of bobbing, dark specks hugged the horizon-line under the dust pall and soon appeared more distinct against a background of rolling swells, yellow with the sere clumps of bunch-grass common to that locality eastward of the high ranges.

"Now what's that outfit in such an almighty jerk for?" drawled the tall, lean horseman as he dropped his right hand meditatively to the butt of the six-gun in a black holster strapped against the white Angora chaps on his right thigh.

"Holy smoke, Skeeter, see 'em come!" he exclaimed to his horse as the riders topped a rise a mile or so ahead at full speed. "They must have a powerful important

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appointment somewhere's up toward the Marias River, if they ain't goin' right on through to Canada."

Shortly afterward the oncoming riders were in plain view on a level stretch of plain across which Teton was traveling.

Once again the man spoke to his horse in the characteristic manner of one who has been much alone on the trail and thus derives a certain cheerful satisfaction from the sound of his own voice.

"Take it easy, Skeeter," he sang in a merry, musical tone. "They're making for us, an' I don't reckon they're just looking for company."

He pulled up his horse at the approach of the riders and was almost immediately addressed by a dark-faced man who appeared to be the spokesman.

"Where you from?" demanded this individual peremptorily.

"That's what I call gettin' right down to business," Teton drawled, with just a flicker of annoyance in his blue eyes.

"He's a blond," he heard one of the men behind the leader remark.

Teton removed his hat.

"Any special preference for light colors today?" he called to the man.

"Here—cut that out," snapped the leader. "You better answer my questions if you know what's good for you."

"Oh, I saw the flash of your badge on your suspender, sheriff," said Teton cheerfully. "You lookin' for somebody who measures up about my style?"

"Where you from?" repeated the leader, not denying that he was an officer.

Teton gestured behind him toward the north. "From numerous places on the High Line," he replied.

"What's your name?"

"Smith—John Smith." And then, as two or three of the men laughed: "Oh, I know it's a joke name, maybe—although I don't usually let folks make a joke of it when the odds are anywhere near even. Lots of people prefer to call me by my monicker, Teton—Teton Smith."

"Any of you know him?" queried the leader turning to his men.

There followed a silent shaking of heads in the negative.

"Stranger around here, then," concluded the leader, addressing Teton. "You're right about me flashing a badge. I'm a sheriff of this county. Where you been all morning?"

"Mostly between here and the Marias," replied Teton, who appeared amused and at the same time nettled because of the underlying seriousness of the sheriff's manner. "I rode this far south from the river since daybreak."

"You sure you wasn't ridin' north and doubled back?" hinted the officer.

"Well now, sheriff, I was under the impression that I was ridin' south all the time, an' as I ain't been up against any hooch in quite a spell I rather reckon I can tell directions in broad daylight; however, it was still dark when I started——"

The sheriff snorted loudly with impatience and whipped out his gun.

"Climb down," he ordered Teton as he covered him.

"Search him," he instructed two of the men in the posse.

Teton yielded amiably to the process, directing the attention to the small number of bills and several silver dollars in his pocketbook which one of the men brought to light.

"Seventeen dollars," he said loudly. "See that they put it all back, Mister Sheriff, for it's the sum total and complete of all that stands between me and the poor-house."

"Shut up!" commanded the sheriff. "That's all he's got on him?"

"There's some tobacco and papers you overlooked in my shirt pocket," Teton volunteered; but his eyes glinted when he met the sheriff's gaze.

"Look over his saddle and that slicker tied on behind," ordered the sheriff. "Nothing there?" Then to Teton, "Where you been working?"

"You don't act any too polite," observed Teton as he deliberately rolled and lit a cigaret. "I don't feel none disposed to answer any more questions until you tell me what all this here fuss and curiosity is about."

"All right, I'll put you where you can talk at your leisure—or mine," retorted the sheriff as he turned to one of his deputies.

"Take him back, Frank, and put him in till we make town again," he said. "Better lift his gun—that's right. Oh, never mind the nippers; make him ride in front and if he starts anything bore him. I ain't taking no chances."

"You better watch out sheriff, I'm a bad one," warned Teton with mock earnestness as he leaped into his saddle and started

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ahead as directed by the deputy. "Better put me in irons," he called back as the posse got under way toward the north again. "I might be 'The Harp' or somebody desperate."

"The Harp!" cried the sheriff, wheeling his horse and riding swiftly back alongside the prisoner. "What do you know about the Harp?"

"I say I might be him or some other desperado," drawled Teton. "You better have me watched close-like, since I surmise you're sending me in to the cooler. Is Cottonwood a big enough town for a jail?"

"No, you ain't The Harp," said the sheriff coolly. "I know what The Harp looks like, but since you happened to mention him at this time I'll keep you around close until I find The Harp or get a good clear line on you. You better begin to think up a safe alibi that'll stand prodding."

"Thanks," Teton shouted to him as he started back to rejoin the posse. "I'll take your tip and have a first-class layout of alibis ready." He grinned at the deputy. "How quick can we make it? I'm hungry."

"Light right out," replied the man behind him; "only don't try to get very far ahead and don't wabble much."

"More tips," sang Teton cheerfully. "Gee, you're all an obligin' crowd down this way. What's his nibs after The Harp for?"

The deputy did not reply to this. It was early in the afternoon when they rode into the town of Cottonwood, so called because of the groves of cottonwood trees in the bend of the river at this point.

Teton was taken at once to the small two-room building which served as a jail. The short main street was deserted as they rode through it. When the deputy had locked Teton in the second, or rear room of the jail, he left with the simple statement that the justice of the peace, who also was jailer, would be in directly with his dinner.

"Tell him I don't expect to pay for it," grinned Teton.

"Call him judge an' maybe he'll throw in a drink," was the deputy's irrelevant reply.

"Man, man, another tip!" cried Teton.

II

WHEN the justice of the peace arrived after an interval of half an hour or more he found his prisoner in a pensive mood. He held a six-shooter in one hand as he passed in a covered dish through a narrow slit in the bars of the cell door. The dish of stew was followed by a cup of coffee.

"Judge, it's a dirty shame that they should saddle a man in your prominent position with the job of looking after a mere prisoner," observed Teton as he placed his dinner on the top of a box which served as a table in the cell.

"Eh, what's that?" said the gray-haired justice, peering at Teton with a new interest in his watery blue eyes.

"I think that sheriff is taking advantage of you in asking you to look after the jail," remarked Teton.

The old man stroked the long ends of his white mustache as if he would by such simple means remove the multitude of chewing-tobacco stains.

"Ye needn't worry," he replied in a high voice. "I ain't bein' imposed upon."

"Well, I hope not, judge," smiled Teton. "I don't want to appear fresh none, only it don't look right to me for a man of your standing to be fetching in meals to prisoners, even though the prisoner happens to be a perfectly respectable cow-hand."

"Eh?" The official considered this for a time. "Well, I don't do this usually. Doing it today because all the others is out lookin' for The Harp. There's five hundred in it for them as catches him."

"What's The Harp been up to around here, judge?"

"He held up the cashier in the bank just afore noon. Hit him over the head with the butt of his gun and laid him out for twenty minutes. Got three thousand, mebbe four, and made clean away."

"You don't say," exclaimed Teton. "Did the cashier know him?"

"Described him to a T," declared the justice. "Sheriff Skinner happened to be over at the Joyce place looking up about some cattle, an' they went after him an' he raised a posse, or three posses—all the men in town—and sent 'em out after the robber an' went hisself. He took our local deputy along or I wouldn't have to be doin' this."

"Who is the local deputy—that fellow who brought me here?" inquired Teton.

"No, that was Frank, the garage man. He's gone out again. Oh, they're all special deputies today—the whole danged town."

"Gee, I could use that five hundred, judge," Teton mused.

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"Say, what you in here for?" demanded the justice.

"For ridin' toward town, I guess. I met the sheriff with his bunch up north an' he stuck me in here I guess to show his authority as much as anything else."

"I don't know as I should be here a talkin' to you like this," said the old man doubtfully. "What'd the sheriff say to ye—eh?"

"He butted right into me, without tellin' me who he was, with a lot of questions an' I didn't feel the necessity for answering 'em right off quick without knowin' what it was all about."

"Well, Frank said you was sent in kinder under suspicion."

"Can they do that, judge?"

"Seems like they can," observed the official, who was eying the prisoner appraisingly.

"But without any kind of a complaint? Don't look quite right to me. Seems to me I ought to have a chance at that five hundred reward for catching The Harp even if I did ride in on the tail-end of the play."

"We'll see what the sheriff says when he comes in," the justice decided. "If he ain't got any reasonable charge for holding you I'll let you go, mebbe."

"Looks to me like he's belittling your authority by throwing me in here without giving you a sensible reason," declared Teton. "You're judge here, ain't that a fact? Sure. I was on my way from Milk River down to join my old outfit, the Triangle C, on t'other side of the Musselshell. Left the Marias at daylight this morning an' the sheriff stopped me out here a ways. Because I kidded him by tellin' him he better keep a strong guard on me for I might be that man Harper or some other desperado he chucked me in here. Spite work, judge. When Old Man Allen of the Triangle hears about it he'll be liable to check up on Sheriff Skinner. Isn't that right?"

The justice shifted uneasily.

"What's your name?"

"Smith—Teton John Smith. Say, judge, Daddy Allen named me after the river that runs through this here town. That's how I got the Teton hung on me."

"Well, I can't do anything about it at present," said the justice hastily. "I'll drop around a little later an' see if you want anything."

"Just a minute before you go, judge," called the puncher. "Did you say anybody saw Harper when he made his getaway?"

"We couldn't seem to find anybody that had seen him. He slipped in from the cottonwood grove, probably—the grove juts almost on the bank and the jail here. That's the back end of the bank you see through your little window. This ain't a very big town an' it starts right at this end close to the end of the railroad bridge. But Kissel, the cashier, described him like a book; saw his black eyes through the holes in his handkerchief mask, got a glimpse of black hair and that stub of a thumb he's got on his right hand. He's a tough customer. He aimed to pick a time when the cashier was alone, for Old Man Wright, the banker, is in Chouteau today. But he wouldn't have stopped if they'd been a dozen in there. He's tough."

"Yes, he's tough," agreed Teton. "I've heard a lot about him. But I sure could use that five hundred reward, judge. I'm down to seventeen dollars an' I want to hang up a day or two in the Falls from here down."

The justice was closing the outer door when Teton finished his remarks.

"The Harp!" Teton said to himself. "A bad customer? Well I guess yes. And they're after him in crowds. A cinch for The Harp—if it's him."

III

TETON lay back upon the narrow bunk which was built along one side of the room and stared at the sky through the cell window. A streamer of fleecy clouds hung strangely low in the sunlit arch and the wind, scented with the subtle odor of the open country, drifted in the window. The air was filled with the warmth of July.

After a time he rose and peered out the barred window. His view was naturally restricted since the aperture looked out upon the backs of other buildings which faced the main street. The jail was built on the edge of the slope down to the river, and in a way was somewhat isolated.

Teton noticed that while most of the buildings he could see were of wood, with false second-story fronts after the manner of frontier towns, one was constructed more substantially of cement blocks—probably the most modern in the old cow-town which was just awakening under the stimulus

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of the vanguard of the homestead rush. He surmised that this building was the bank building which the old justice had mentioned.

He fell to studying the rear of this structure. It was a one-story affair with a basement. There were two barred windows in the rear of the one story and a single window in the basement, about two feet square, almost level with the ground, and also barred.

Teton could see no sign of life in the limited space at the rear of the buildings within his confined range of vision. The curtains were drawn down over the rear windows of the bank. The basement window apparently was uncurtained and was tipped back slightly in the manner in which an ordinary transom is operated. The sun in the West slanted against the small pane and the effect was the same as if the glass were painted an opaque golden hue. But the small space at the top where the window was tipped back left a narrow black strip against the gold—a vivid, narrow streak of dark color against the lighter scheme of the rear of the building.

Teton automatically absorbed these details as he smoked innumerable cigarets and listened impatiently for the return of the justice or the sheriff's posse. Finally he sat down on the edge of the bunk and addressed the box which had served as a table.

"I ain't especially hankering to put any *hombre* in jail for a spell," he drawled as he built another smoke with brown paper and flake tobacco, "but The Harp is a bad'un an' I wouldn't feel conscience-stricken to put the likes of him where he couldn't work so free an' easy like with that greased gun of his.

"An' I sure could use that five hundred bucks," he added as an afterthought.

He smoked for a time in silence. But his habit of years of riding herd was strong upon him. His thoughts brought speech.

"Look here, old wood an' nails," he said, kicking at the box with a jingling spur. "The Harp ain't nobody's fool. He knows the open prairie is no place to hide in midday, especially when it's gettin' all cut up with homesteaders' wire. He knows there's telephones working in this country these days, too."

He gave the box another kick.

"Now then if The Harp *did* bend his gun over that cashier's head an' rob the bank he *knew* the cashier was goin' to be alone. He probably came in last night an' *saw* the old banker get away this morning. He likely watched from somewhere in the cottonwoods—maybe in the top of one of them—and waited till he saw the coast was clear long about noon after the citizens had made their dinky deposits for the day."

Another pause ended with another kick for the box.

"Now, old wood an' nails, listen! What did The Harp pick out the middle of the day as the best time for pulling his nefarious job for? And would he go romping across the open country on a horse in plain sight when he could guess that they'd be out after him as quick as they could get started? What say, old wood an' nails, would he? An' The Harp just naturally crafty?"

A final kick sent the box toppling. Teton returned to the window. The sun now was slowly sinking behind the mountains in the west. Already the glorious gold and crimson banners of the departing day were beginning to stain the high skies. The twilight would come swiftly on the heels of sunset and gradually merge with the dark velvet of the cool, star-lit prairie night.

Teton remained at the window, now and then indulging in a low muttering. But soon, as the shadows deepened, he began to pace the room and took to shaking the bars of his cell door. He returned to the window constantly. His face was grave; his eyes keenly alert. Each time after leaving the window he would glance anxiously at the ancient watch he carried in the watch-pocket of his trousers beneath his chaps.

The sun had gone down and the twilight was rapidly deepening when the outer door swung open. Teton leaped to the bars of the cell door, stifling an exclamation of relief with difficulty. The justice and another man entered. The justice painstakingly lit a lantern and held it up to the bars of Teton's cell so that its feeble rays shone clear on Teton's face.

"Know him?" asked the justice of the man who was with him.

"Can't say I do," replied the man. "He don't look so powerfully bad, though—cowpuncher, ain't you, lad?"

"You've said it," replied Teton with a grin. "Guess I made a mistake in crossing the sheriff with a little chaff. Say, judge, I've been working on this Harper case. What time did the cashier go home?"

"Eh, what? Working on the case?"

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The justice chuckled and nudged his companion. "Kissel went home right after it all happened. He's got a pretty bad head if enybody wants to know."

"Who took his place in the bank?" smiled Teton, building another cigaret.

"Nobody," grinned the justice. "Kissel an' the old man is all as ever works in there. Kissel locked the place up. Why, you got any clew?"

"That the sheriff you've got with you?" asked Teton, who knew it was no such person.

"No, that's the proprietor of the Round-up Bar and Dance Hall," answered the justice. "I brought him over thinking he might identify you. He knows lots of people around here. 'Bout the only man left in town today an' that's because the doc won't let him ride."

"Say, judge," said Teton earnestly. "It's—— to be shut up like this all afternoon. If that sheriff ever gets back here an' takes the time to find out just who I am he'll turn me loose quicker'n lightning. But that don't help none now, an' I need a drink. I need a drink powerful bad, judge. You know ——"

"Oh, we'll bring you over a drink," the justice's companion broke in. "The judge can bring it over with your dinner."

"An' let it get out sometime that Teton Smith had to beg a drink in jail," exclaimed Teton. "I'd die first—croak and kick the bucket good an' proper right there on that lousy bunk! Not me, cowboy. I drink at the bar like a man, an' pay for it same way. That's my style. I ain't used to drinking in jails. You're both armed, I guess. I know the judge is packing a wicked shootin'-iron an' I ain't got any more gun than a jack-rabbit. Take me over to the bar an' let me buy a drink for the three of us. I've got a few dollars. That ain't asking too much."

A brief silence greeted this outburst but there was no gainsaying the conviction which Teton's earnest plea carried.

"It ain't reg'lar," said the justice.

"An' it ain't reg'lar for me to be in jail," declared Teton in a hurt voice. "Now that I come to think about it more, judge, it ain't so much the drink as it is the principle of the thing. I take it you've been in this country a long time, ain't that so, judge?"

"More'n forty years," the old justice confessed with pride.

"An' I was born up above Chouteau," said Teton. "Judge, I've done about everything a man does along with the cowpunching game—drank, gambled, fought, an' raised —— generally. But I ain't never stole any cattle nor held anybody up. Maybe it ain't my fault because I've never had to do any of those things. But I want it clear I didn't do 'em, see? I ain't an angel, but I ain't a thief, neither. Look at me in that danged smelly lantern light, judge—do I look right or have I got to remember you wouldn't trust me as far as a saloon an' back with my holster empty an' you with a gun in your hand?"

The justice did look at the regular features of the cowpuncher. Finally he bobbed his white head in sudden decision.

"Hold this lantern, Joe," he said to his companion. "I'm goin' to take him over for a drink. This *is* a —— of a place to drink in, anyway. Mebbe he does need a snort. Keep the light on him."

He turned the key in the lock and swung open the door.

"Come on, now, Smith, but walk ahead an' if you act any frisky-like I'll fill you full of lead," he warned as Teton left the cell. "Keep the light on him, Joe."

Teton led the way to the saloon according to directions, at a fast pace. It was nearly dark. Before the bar he pulled out his pocket-book and laid out some silver dollars.

The justice nodded in approval.

"He said he'd pay for 'em," he commented.

"This feller don't look like a desperado to me," observed Joe as he slid bottle and glasses upon the bar.

"Help yourself first, judge," Teton invited, eying the lamp which burned on the back bar.

It was the only light in the place.

The justice, standing at Teton's right, held his pistol in his right hand as he reached for the bottle with his left.

Teton leaped upon him like a huge cat, wrested the gun from his hand in another instant, and covered the two men.

"I hate to do this, gents, but you've got to have faith in me a while longer."

He backed toward the door.

"If you start after me I'll show you mighty quick I can shoot as well as talk."

The gun spoke from his hip and the lamp was shattered. In the darkness Teton dashed out the door.

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IV

FROM the road into town from the north came a pound of hoofs. The justice, standing in the center of the street, waved the posse to a halt.

"He's gone!" the old man shouted to the sheriff in the lead. "That feller you sent back here to jail. He's escaped!"

The sheriff loosed a volley of oaths when he finally succeeded in getting the story from the justice and Joe.

"Let him talk you into helping him make his getaway," he roared. "He talked suspicious to me. Maybe he pulled the job this morning, lit out, an' doubled back to get the money he'd cached around here somewheres. Kissler was in a daze. I bet he didn't know if the feller that held him up was short or tall or a white man or a nigger. Scared. An' you let him out!"

More oaths from the sheriff punctuated his remarks.

"There's just a chance some of the other boys who went down the river and south may pick him up coming back. Where'd Frank put his horse?"

Before the question could be answered a shot cracked in the still air from the direction of the jail. After a flashing interval of silence there came another shot followed by two more.

The sheriff and the men with him drove the spurs into their horses and dashed around the corner.

Another shot cracked and the sheriff caught sight of a spurt of flame.

"Behind the bank!" he cried. "Surround the bank, boys—ride!"

A cordon was thrown about the bank building and then from a spot near the edge of the grove of cottonwoods came a hail—

"That you, sheriff?"

"Who's there?" yelled the sheriff, wheeling his horse from behind the bank.

"Just a special deputy bringing in a prisoner. We'll walk right up to the Round-Up Saloon—tain't far, an' my man can walk."

"Keep 'em covered," ordered the sheriff as two men approached from the deeper shadow of the trees.

The pair walked straight to the Round-Up and entered the bar, which was lighted now by another lamp.

"Smith!" cried the old justice, who had followed behind the sheriff as the officer dismounted and entered behind the men.

"And The Harp!" gasped the sheriff.

"And the five hundred dollars' reward, sheriff—don't forget that," said Teton Smith grinning feebly.

His left hand hung useless at his side.

Harper, the bandit, was leaning heavily against the bar.

"Guess you better put him in a chair and call a doctor," said Teton. "I had to hit him in the shoulder or somewhere afore he'd quit shooting."

"But how in the devil did you get him?"

"Why, you assisted me, sheriff," explained Teton. "You put me in a cell and I just naturally had to look at what I could see. One of the things I saw was the basement window behind the bank. There was a dark place showed where the window was opened a little. The Harp couldn't stand it—he had to smoke. Some of the smoke leaked out the window across that black space an' I saw it. When I found out that the cashier had gone home after the shooting I knew I was on the right track. An' say, sheriff, I had to make *some* talk to get out of that jail. You see, I didn't want to split the reward with anybody, for I need money powerfully bad, sheriff."

"In the basement? In the bank's own storeroom?" The sheriff was still mystified.

"Sure," smiled Teton. "The Harp's got brains, sheriff. He *knew* you all would pile out into the country looking for him an' he knew Kissler would take to bed after that rap on the head. So he just dropped into the basement and hid there while you all started on the run and Kissler went home."

"Hid in the bank!" exclaimed the sheriff.

"Sure—safest place. He didn't figure you'd look for him where he turned the trick. An' he was waiting for night to make his getaway on the night freight. Gee, I was nervous when it was getting dark. An' I got there just in time. He knocked off those playthings they thought was bars on the basement window and was just startin' to beat it when I got there. Then he started shooting. Look at his pockets—bulging with money. Now, I've got to see the doc myself, for my left arm is punctured. Then, I think, sheriff we better talk about that reward."

"You can have it," said the sheriff. "I'm tickled to death to get my hands on The Harp. I've got some other scores to settle with that bird."

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Men of the Night

A Four-Part Story - Part One

by Gordon Young

Author of "Bucking Fate," "Dead or Alive," etc.

IT WAS a brilliant affair, or at least extravagant; and largely made up of the class known as fast and loose that was week-ending at the country place of Mrs. Helena Holder Louden, sister of Frank Holder, a big stupid clod of a fellow—to all outward appearances anyway—who had more millions than fingers and toes.

A troupe of entertainers, dancers, magicians, coon songsters, and the usual vaudeville assortment, appeared, played their tricks, did their stunts, and vanished into the foliage back of the silk-canopied stage.

The guests, for the most part, were discussing the crime wave and wondering what the country was coming to. A few of them talked about the price of booze; but the others were agitated over this crime business, and the miserable failure of the police to do anything.

"Police are the worst crooks of all," or some such phrase, was knocked about from mouth to ear among them.

It was almost a personal matter, this crime wave. They had a lot of stealable stuff; which was not surprizing as many of them in some way or other were connected with somebody or other who had been dealing in government contracts all through the war—ship-yards and such.

However, it wasn't of that sort of thievery that they talked; but of raids on fashionable hotels by a lot of dope-filled gangsters; of bold robberies in broad daylight; particularly of one daring gem-thief who had some how got the name of Black Wolf.

But in every department of roguery things were on the hum. Headlines had been clangorous for months. Every day or two there was something new in criminal daring. Crooks were everywhere, bold and successful.

Mrs. Helena Holder Louden, with ten thousand dollars dangling from under a massive double chin, blamed the war. It had, she said, taken a lot of nice boys and taught them to kill people. She felt that she could see some connection between picking a pocket and bayoneting a Hun.

While the conversation rippled and bubbled and buzzed among the guests, a fellow with sweeping coat tails and sleeves rolled back to show that he was not up to any unfair tricks, while cracking hen eggs from which he pulled Belgian hares, kept a cheerful patter going though he was practically addressing himself. No one else appeared to be listening.

A tall man by the name of Karmondy, a picturesque sort of figure in the glittering fast life, who seemed to know all about everything that was going on, was saying:

"—they call him Black because he wears it and a mask, you know. And Wolf because he robs his fellow crooks—or anybody else. It's all the same to him, just as long as they have anything stealable. Right now he's the big mystery of the underworld. They say——"

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A few feet away a fellow who had been introduced as Merwin Middleton was watching Karmondy from the corners of his eyes while pretending to be listening to a puffy-eyed girl who had a long tale to tell about contraband booze and how a friend of hers had hoodwinked the prohibition officers.

Karmondy in a self-satisfied way was going on with:

"—Cabron. You all know of Cabron. Cabron's Restaurant. He's a power in the Tenderloin. And rich. Everybody's afraid of him, and with good reason——"

The magician finished his act, bowed humbly and departed without any one apparently aware that he had ever existed. A snappy monolog artist, oozing pep, Charley-Chaplined on to the stage; but with Karmondy for a rival he was hopelessly out of it.

"—two girls. Both beauties, they say. One was a niece. Cabron brought her over from Italy. About the same age as his daughter, Leela. I never saw the cousin that I know of; but Leela! Talk of a savage princess—she's wild as a Hottentot and haughty as a movie star.

"Well, this Black Wolf went right into Cabron's house and stuck *him* up. Not only that, but stripped Leela—she is a beautiful creature—right down to her diamond studded anklets. Took every bit of jewelry she had on her. And, so the story goes, she fell in love with him, right then and there!"

"Without seeing his face?" a woman tense with interest asked.

"Oh, she *did* see his face. She snatched off his mask. You can't tell how much truth there is in a story that goes the rounds of the underworld. But"—complacently—"I have some friends down there that are pretty wise. They say Black Wolf fell in love with the niece."

"Ye everlasting triangle," murmured a cynical young man.

"More angles to this than that," said Karmondy.

He was expansive, and looked about him with pleasure at the eager, listening faces of hectic women.

"The story goes—I got it from my friends, and they are pretty much in the know—that this niece disappeared because— You see, she *did* disappear. She was forced into marrying somebody. Just why, nobody knows; but there's a story about that too. I'll tell it in a minute.

"What I am trying to say is that she disappeared because she was afraid of Leela—jealousy, and that sort of thing. Anybody would disappear if Leela got on a rampage. She's what Kipling calls 'all hot sand and ginger.'

"About this niece: Cabron made her marry somebody, some worthless dog. Nobody knows just why; only they say this Black Wolf was mixed up in it.

"You see, what he had really intended to do with her—this niece, you know—was to set her up with an aunt, a long pedigree, servants, and marry her off to some rich man—make her a bait to hook a war-baby. And after the pretty niece was married and well established, some burglar would drop in and shoot her husband—don't you see?

"Why, the inconsolable young widow would be left with a million or two, and Cabron would show her what bank to put it in and how to write the checks. Clever idea, don't you think?"

Lean featured and puffy women, those tired with sleepless nights of man-chasing, some who had married for money, others who wanted to, were really shocked. Common guilt carries with it no feeling of kinship.

"Yes," said Karmondy. "Very clever idea. Niece was a nice young innocent girl. Just the sort for the part. But something happened, and she was thrown to some gangster like a piece of meat to a dog. And vanished.

"My friends tell me Cabron is trying his best to locate her—get her back. Has offered a reward for any one who will tell him where she is. Some think maybe Leela could tell—at least where the girl is buried.

"Sounds like a Middle Age murder romance, doesn't it? Well—" Karmondy was oracular— "let me tell you there is just as much hate and jealousy and murder going on right now as there ever was in the Middle or any other age. And a princess of the underworld like Leela Cabron doesn't want a rival any more than her father wants one in the restaurant business—said business being chiefly to furnish wild-eyed parties to respectable young gentlemen from Riverside Drive, *et cetera*. Get me?"

Karmondy was a man about town, a sport, often involved in debt. He gambled a good deal and was a chap that loved

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dashing damosels and in turn was often loved.

"Ah," said the lantern-jawed and cynical Mrs. Delacroix. "Very good of you, Carl, to modernize Boccaccio for us. But I prefer to have baked lover's hearts and bedroom murders in their medieval settings. Besides, why doesn't something of all this get into the newspapers?"

Karmondy smiled condescendingly.

"Nothing is news until the police admit it. The police admit nothing they can't prove. They can't prove a tenth of what they know. Besides, don't think for a minute that a fellow like Black Wolf—that name should be medieval enough for you—is going around *advertising* himself.

"Why, it's said the only two people that know what he looks like outside his mask are Leela Cabron and her cousin. I don't know her name. Everybody speaks of her as Cabronette—play on the word, you know. Cabaret—Cabronette. She danced at Cabron's. And it's pretty medieval—at Cabron's."

He shrugged his shoulders as if he could tell of greater mysteries and their secrets. He had the smile and affectedly weary air of one who knows far more than other people will ever learn; and at that moment he was rather well satisfied with the interest on the faces of the group of women who had been listening.

The women, all of the women, were brilliant in the warm, diffused glow of a thousand lights burning in alabaster caskets, behind colored glass, under stained parchment, in the midst of flowers and greenery.

Stomachers, brooches, dinner rings, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, buckles, glittered and glistened. They were the insignia of a moneyed crowd, recklessly rich. Aigrets and gossamer webs swayed and floated; silks rustled; there was the tinkle and shimmer of spangles.

The men, from the neck down as alike as peas out of the same pod, white-breasted and black-backed, were also chattering among themselves about the crime wave.

Packages of bonds by the half-million were stolen with the impudent ease of gum snatched from a peanut-stand. Warehouses were looted. Moving-vans, big as box cars, backed to front doors and didn't leave enough for a fellow to identify his own home. Blackmailers murdered people that resisted them. Gangsters fought battles in down-town streets. There was —— to pay.

FROM time to time some of the guests glanced at the entertainers; but no one was interested.

"Pretty dull, don't you think?" the puffy-faced young woman asked of Merwin Middleton, who sat with knuckles to chin and eyes aslant indifferently watching a pair of black-faces.

"Did you ever try telling your jokes to a profile?" he replied.

She stared at him vaguely, not quite sure whether or not she had been insulted.

Said Mrs. Delacroix, the lantern-jawed dowager to whom she complained:

"I would like to know what is the matter with this Merwin Middleton, anyway. He told me I had no idea how nearly human my butler would be if I could get him drunk! I haven't the faintest idea of what he meant. He seems an impossible sort of fellow.

"The Holder-Loudens, my deah," she went on, careless of whose roof she was under, "are impossible in another way. The Loudens— it's a fact, my deah, but they have been trying for a hundred and fifty years to get into society. Oh, really.

"Indeed, the Loudens are an old New York family, but they have never had money. And they haven't any now. It is really amusing in a way—though I *do* say there ought to be some means to make dead men mind their own business.

"Why my deah, here is big, fat stupid Frank Holder—and every dollar of the Holder estate went to him. It did, you know. His sister has to gouge household expenses out of him. I really pity Helena.

"Louden hasn't anything. No, the Loudens haven't a thing but a lot of tombstones in a fashionable cemetery. And when cremation became the fad they couldn't get into society—not even when they died to do it. Oh, my deah, I am *not* exaggerating.

"Poor Helena, she thought *she* was getting into society when she married Louden. And just out of Texas. You really can't blame her. Poor woman, the Holders do so run to girth. That's what Helena calls it—girth. My deah, you can see that it is just plain ordinary fat.

"Oh, Helena diets and massages. An' my deah, she rolls all over the floor as if she had cramps, but it does no good. You've heard of the Bourbon lip? Well, it's the same thing in the Holders—only it's *girth*. There are a dozen cousins and nieces, all

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the same—girth. Look at Frank. Utterly impossible. Stupid too.

"And Helena, poor thing, she is frightened to death every time a woman looks at Frank. You see, my deah, there is a chance of Frank having a fatty heart. His father died of it.

"The old man had heard about the Astors leaving everything to the eldest son; and he wanted to found a family too, like old John Jacob's. So everything went to Frank. And Frank is supposed to hand it on down. But if he doesn't marry there will be no eldest son to hand it to—there will be only two sisters and a lot of detached cousins and things. Poor Helena, of course she loves her brother; but oh, my deah, what she wouldn't do to a sister-in-law. . . . Well, that is the first time I ever saw a theatrical person willing to hide her face."

The talkative dowager had glanced toward the stage as a lone dancer, completely dressed in black, leaped out with light bounds, flinging herself this way and that, going through some sort of a devil dance. With the dazzling swiftness and finish of a ballerina she caught and held the attention of the listless guests.

"Javotte Murilla," Mrs. Louden murmured to inquiry, pleased at the interest.

The murmur ran from lip to lip. No one had heard of her.

She was a brilliant dancer, audacious, graceful. She conveyed the impression of a whimsy, adorable personality even through the mask and somber powder-puff skirts.

The blasé idlers scattered about were interested, particularly the men.

Merwin Middleton watched her closely.

His was a perpetually half-bored manner, with slow, dark eyes that watched—languidly it is true; but they watched everything that went on about him. He had thin, aristocratic features, listened well to the emptiest of talk, and smoked a special brand of cigarets.

When Javotte Murilla finished her dance she did not remove the mask. She was called back by a pattering of hands and made her bow, masked.

"She *must* be hopeless," said the lantern-jawed dowager.

More questions of who the girl was and what about her were asked of Mrs. Louden.

Helena Holder Louden was a large person. She did not give off an impression of good nature, and carried her lips tightly pressed as if constantly resisting impulses.

"My deah, poor Helena is half-starved. Really! She doesn't dare eat. Most unfortunate, that family affliction of girth."

However, she had respect for her busybody of a husband. The hundred and fifty years of fashionable funerals awed her. Louden was a fussy little confidential-voiced side-whiskered old fellow, who took social affairs as seriously as if he were the butler.

Mrs. Louden said of the dancer:

"I don't know the first thing about the person. She wore a veil when she came, so I heard. Frank engaged the entertainers."

Some of the men—Javotte's lithe, shapely body interested some of them—went in search of Frank.

They found him off to one side alone, smoking a big cigar. And he grunted by way of greeting.

Franklin Holder was very thick-bodied, thick-featured, dull of expression, heavy, slow, awkward, and inclined to make grunting sounds if anybody prodded him into an unwelcome conversation. He appeared to be an unsocial creature, could not dance, would not play cards, smoked but little, did not drink, never told off-color stories, had no interest in books. To the amusement of her friends Mrs. Louden insisted:

"But he does a lot of *thinking*. Really. You'd be surprized."

Demaine, a lazy, cheerful sort of fellow who said once a year was enough for anybody to get drunk—if he didn't sober up—asked about Javotte.

Holder said:

"Unh. Got 'em through an agency, of course. Unh. Think I go around stage-doors and pick 'em up? Un-unh."

He was unpretentiously awkward, frankly, almost wilfully so; but never nervous. There was a steady directness about his eyes that was supposed, however, to indicate dulness. He stared rather than looked at people.

"What agency?" Karmondy asked.

Holder regarded him with the sustained stare of one whose mental processes are slow; and when at last the question seemed to have penetrated he grunted and reached fumblingly into an inner coat pocket, drawing out a note-book that he thumbed awkwardly.

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He studied a page for some moments and read the name of a theatrical agency. Grunted, and put away his book.

"A good deal of an ass, isn't he?" some one earlier in the evening had said to Merwin Middleton, jerking a thumb at the bulking millionaire, motionless as a Buddha, staring vaguely at nothing.

"I say," Merwin had answered, "isn't there an old yarn of some kind about a lion getting into an ass's skin and fooling the animals?"

"You're clear off, old man. It was the other way. An ass got into a lion's skin. Æsop, you know."

"Oh," said Merwin innocently. "But I knew the barnyard crowd was fooled."

To Holder, Karmondy was saying just then that he would like to meet this Javotte Murilla. She seemed interesting. What did she look like? Holder had seen her, hadn't he?

Somebody accused Holder of getting red in the face.

"Blushing, by Jove!" one of the men laughed.

Karmondy banteringly demanded:

"What's the matter, old boy? Are you blushing—or did I step on your toes? No offense, I hope. Ha-ha-ah."

The inference that Holder, big fat stupid Holder, might have or be trying to have an affair with the Stygian fairy made the men laugh.

Holder grunted impersonally, wearily.

Karmondy knew a lot about public women. He was saying:

"—why, she's good. On any stage she'd be a sensation. She can dance. Wonder how she came to be poked in with a bunch of third-raters. You know, I've got a feeling that I've seen her dance before. I usually have a line on all the good ones. Know their work."

He was a bit oracular, with feet apart, one hand behind him, a cigaret in the other. He had a way of lifting his eyebrows enigmatically, and often smiled with an air of half-amused tolerance.

A young fellow came up to the group with news:

"I say, this Javotte—isn't she stunning?—and a couple of others are staying over. Put on another show tomorrow. Ever'body's wondering what she looks like."

Some of the men, jesting, accused Holder of being a sly one; they asked why he didn't give them a chance, and let them know that she was staying over? They also remarked, one to another, teasing him, that nobody would have a look-in with him for a rival.

They were clever, snappy fellows, or tried to be; many of them had been drinking a little; and he was dull, heavy, sluggish. He took it in silence, except for an occasional grunt, and under his heavy lid looked stupidly from face to face.

The show ended. Dancing began. Couples glided over the shimmering wax. Holder, who never danced, disappeared.

II

AT SOMEWHERE around three-thirty A.M. when the house was quiet, and the last guest, even those the worse for a drop too much, had straggled bedward, two people came up from the grounds and entered the house.

A watchman half-dozing in the veranda shadows stared after them, winked at the darkness, grinned knowingly to himself, leaned back in the chair and wished that he too were a multimillionaire.

Fat didn't make any difference if a fellow had the coin. He hadn't seen the woman's face, but he knew that she was a beauty. A fellow rich as Holder could pick and choose, snap up none but the best.

Women—soft, silken, sinuous women. They were as much for sale as the dresses they wore. The watchman sighed heavily and sank back into a doze.

A night light burned on the stairs.

Holder bulked large beside the slim shape enveloped in a long, dark, velvet cloak with the hood thrown back. She held his arm, leaning against him affectionately.

He walked unhurriedly, with the air of plodding that was natural to him. Her steps, though slow, keeping pace with his, were light. It was as if, had she wished, she could have trodden air. She watched his face attentively, admiringly, with all the air of a woman in love—an air that means nothing much of the time.

They climbed the stairs and in the hall were noiseless. She looked up and down furtively, listening, watching; then they turned and went down the hallway into what was known as the west wing.

Here and there could be heard the sounds of sleep. Many of the guests had gone to

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bed on a full stomach. One or two had been carried to bed by servants.

They stopped before a door, and she fumbled for a moment with a key; then they stood in silence, her arms about his thick neck.

Several times they made as if to part, but each time she caught him back. She had opened the door and started within, but paused, catching him again.

"I *love* you—*I* love you—I love *you!*" she whispered passionately.

He was lost in the arms of the slender, swift-gestured little creature, and could not have broken away had he tried harder than he did; so their parting was delayed minute after minute.

In the dim light he bulked like some satyrous half-world animal, and she, in one drapery from collar to heels, was not unlike the witch maiden of an enchanted forest.

He left her, and she stood in the open door of her unlighted room, looking after him as he moved slowly down the hall. He was awkward and seemed tired, and must go up to the top of the house for his bed. It was there he had chosen his rooms.

She sighed heavily, closed the door, locked it, and stood for some moments in darkness before snapping on the light.

Then she walked to a tall pier glass, gazed at the reflection for a moment, and dropped the long velvet coat—casting it off her shoulders, letting it fall in a semicircle about her small feet.

She turned slowly from side to side, appraisingly eying the mirrored shape.

From within her bodice she took a silken mask, one which she had worn in the dance and which covered her face entirely. She fastened it on, then studied the maiden in startling black that stared back at her through oblique slits.

"I wonder will they know me when we are married?"

She was thinking aloud, and spoke with a heavy trace of accent. The question seemed important.

Javotte took off the mask and held it danglingly by the ribbons in her slim fingers as she continued to stare at herself.

Her hair was bound with a glittering black band. She lifted the band and shook her bobbed hair. It puffed bushily, clustering in loose curls.

"I *could* wear a wig," she said meditatively. "But—but I won't."

The black puff skirt sprayed out. Her legs were in black silk, with frogs half-way to the knee having some vague connection with the black slippers, sparkling with buckles of black beads. A black chiffon collar puffed up around her neck, holding up the little face, seemingly far too young to be suitably framed in black. Openwork straps of braided silk passed over her shoulders. Her face, arms and shoulders were bare, white; she had whitened the shoulders and arms with chalk to make the contrast more startling. Her face was not plastered with powder.

"Eet is like the devil I look," she said soberly.

She turned her head, gazed at herself from over her shoulder with eyes narrowed. They were dark brown eyes with long black lashes—lustrously dark, perhaps blackened. Then—

"Some day I mus' be all in white like a saint."

She smiled faintly at herself.

Turning to an opened steamer trunk she lifted out a large fan of black ostrich plumes and spread it, preening herself. She glanced temptingly over its edge at herself, practising the arts of Delilah; then she put the fan behind her, playing, so that it flared out from shoulder to shoulder and above her head. Then again she put it before flirtatiously.

But her face was studious, appraising. She was not stroking her vanity. She was working at rehearsal.

Presently she was through with the fan. Sighing, she dropped it toward the trunk.

Then from the bodice she drew out a small package and slipped a string of pearls about her neck, a large diamond on to her finger.

"So much mo-ney!"

She said it without enthusiasm, just commenting on something vague; whether the money represented by the jewels or the man who gave them, she perhaps could not have told.

Then, "Mo-ney!" and another sigh.

Javotte replaced the jewels in the satin-lined chamois bag and laid the bag on the dressing-table, to which she turned.

QUICKLY, deftly, she unsnapped the shoulder-straps and the black silk fell away from her breast. She reached behind to unloosen the skirt, when:

"Ah—pardon me. But I—ah—I think I'd better let you know I'm here."

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She whirled, her hands instinctively covering her bosom and fear glittering in her eyes.

The voice had spoken with an overtone of mockery. It was a subtly modulated voice, pleasant, polite, but dangerous.

The man in the doorway of the closet was masked, in evening dress. Between his white gloved fingers was an unlighted cigaret. But no gun.

His was the poise of a finished actor. In his manner there was no nervousness, no haste, no hesitancy.

"I *thought* I knew you," he said, nodding slightly.

"Me!" she cried in sheer terror, with a great deal more than the fear of a burglar in the choked, tense word.

He answered:

"I said I *thought* I knew you. But——"

"No—no. Eet is not who you think. I am not——"

"No? Aren't you? And who did I think you were?"

"Oh," she answered vaguely.

"You are Javotte Murilla, aren't you? The lovely dancer. May I smoke? I have been stuffed up there for a long time."

He lighted the cigaret; but presently pinched it out and put it down.

She breathed rapidly, her breast heaving, and gazed as if hypnotized, not sure whether he was mocking her or not.

"When you danced I wished that I might see your face. The pleasure, unexpected.

"You see—" he was explaining with an air of cynical kindness— "I was caught. Oh, trapped like a timid little mouse. Couldn't get out. I intended to wait till you slept, but I thought it better—ah—to startle you than——"

He bowed, modest. Then reproachfully:

"This wasn't supposed to be your room anyway. I really am not as much to blame. I noticed that you have a trinket or two, but——"

He drew a card from his pocket, glanced at the notations, then:

"Mrs. Delacroix—you know her?—rather elderly—has a jaw—considerable jaw—and many jewels. Very many. She was to have this room. See——"

He patted a pocket of his coat.

"I collect jewels. Yes, you see, Hoover and I have to feed Europe's babies some way."

He was faintly ironical, slightly amused. Javotte was afraid of him.

She was not cowardly, or unused to dangers. But she was not sure about this fellow. His manner disturbed her. She was almost afraid that he was *not* a stranger.

"Who are you?" she asked, shrinking back, not quite so much in fear as she pretended.

"A gentle wanderer in the night," he said carelessly.

She moved farther and farther from him, drawing away, edging back, still in the attitude of shrinking. He noticed, but smiled slightly, saying:

"Children and dogs like me. Don't be afraid."

She had edged backward to her open steamer trunk.

He looked away from her to the dressing-table and took a step nearer, his eyes on the chamois bag.

"A rather pretty ring, from a distance. I wonder——"

He reached out.

Javotte, swift as a bird's flutter, bent down, and her hand came up with an automatic advanced.

He jerked his face toward her. His fingers did not drop the bag he was just lifting. She could see a slight, amused smile flickering along the corners of his lips.

He spoke indifferently, looking away from her, and went on opening the bag:

"I emptied that gun when I first came in. I always do. Very careful about it. Saves unpleasantness. Um-m. This *is* a pretty ring."

He held it up, looking from it to her admiringly; and again at the ring.

"And that necklace——" His fingers went greedily into the bag and he peered at the bag's mouth. He ignored her.

Javotte, with a gesture of mingled anger and hopelessness, threw the gun down into the trunk.

"Let me see——"

He stepped toward her, holding the necklace up with both hands.

"Would you mind placing it at your throat; the effect—I would like to see it."

She drew back, one hand holding the black silk to her bosom. She was angered. Back she went until she was against the wall.

He bent down, picked the gun out of the trunk.

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Javotte made a slight inarticulate sound and leaned heavily against the wall as she saw him detach the loaded clip and throw it on the bed.

He tossed out the remaining shell, kicking it under the dressing-table, then laid the gun down.

"You see," he explained pleasantly, "I couldn't stand another surprize like that. I won't sleep well for a month as it is. I thought this was Mrs. Delacroix's room—had just got into it when I heard you coming. And if you hadn't been so absorbed in wrapping Holder around your little finger you would have noticed that your door was unlocked. Poor old Holder—so it's marriage, is it?"

"Who is eet you are—*p'ease?*"

"Who ez eet zat you are, also p'ease? You *are* a pretty child, Javotte. But this black—so much of it suggests the widow."

"What!"

She was almost choked; her eyes blazed. Somehow, too, chords of terror had been struck.

"What a temperamental kitten you are! Holder will surely get jarred out of his Buddha-like pose if he marries— Tell me, is it Miss or *Mrs.* Murilla?"

"Oh, the insult! I could keel you!"

She was erect, angry, her eyes flashing, and the loose silk over her breast had slipped.

"Kill me? Oh, no, no, Javotte. Here——"

He picked up the hooded velvet cloak and tossed it toward her, saying indifferently:

"Veil some of your charm. I can be the best kind of a friend, but I am no good as a lover. So don't——"

He gestured idly.

Javotte was furious, but she could say nothing. She snatched the cloak about her, gripping the brocaded softness with fierce little fingers. She was highly angered at his studied insult, the more bitter for the indifference in his manner and pleasantness of voice.

"To be married, eh?"

He paused, looking at her thoughtfully, as a connoisseur might study a statue, a painting or a prize dog that a friend was about to buy.

She in turn watched him closely, studying him, afraid that she might recognize him, fearful that she had at some time known him.

He was remote, at once polite and mocking.

"Fascinating. Yes. Expensive, too. Lovely as the Devil's Daughter—all in black. And you will be lovely as a—ah—as the saint you spoke of.

"But tell me—I really want to know—how *did* you meet him? I never imagined he led any night life. Not the way he likes to sleep. He isn't a rounder."

"He is a ver' fine man!" she said earnestly, defensively.

A smile flickered along under the mask's edge as the fellow nodded slightly.

"Marriage, eh? He must be. Fifty millions—or is it only five? Hm-m. How much you going to give Hoover and me for our Balkan babies?"

"Bah!" said Javotte, furious.

"Listen, you little leopardess."

He spoke unangered, patiently.

"What good will it do you to marry him? Pull out all the fleece you can carry. But—" his voice grew acidly sarcastic—"why throw yourself away? It is small-town stuff to *marry* a man to get his money."

"Eet is not mo-ney. I love heem!"

"Of course you do. Um-hm. In your life have you married all the men you have loved?"

She bent forward slightly, scrutinizing this fellow, and demanded:

"Why all the time do you say 'marry' to me? You will tell me that?"

He looked at her a long time, then shook his head.

"I suppose it was the widow's suit of black——"

Javotte gave a start.

"Why, what's the matter?"

She was holding herself in, keeping down fear, and answered in a flat voice—

"Noth-ing."

After a pause that increased her uneasiness he asked quietly, but with still the subtle overtone of irony faintly mocking her:

"I'm interested. Really. So won't you tell me why you love Holder? 'Most everybody I know thinks he is rather stupid. He certainly looks it, don't you think?"

She responded defiantly, perhaps relieved to talk, to defend herself:

"Eet is true, like I tell you. He is a ver' fine man. These people, they do not

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know heem. He hates them. Eet is they who are the stupid. They do not see the beeg fine man that look contemp'uous at them, so!"

She illustrated dramatically, with eyes half-closed and head up, every fiber of her tense and vibrant.

"He is a beeg, ver' fine man. I love heem!"

She stood with head up challengingly, eyes ablaze, a little hand clenched into a hard fist at her side.

The inscrutable eyes peered at her from the mask-holes. The man was motionless and gave no sign of belief or disbelief. He stood in an attitude of listening, waiting, urging her to go on.

"He tell me his sister give a party to—he call them 'a lot o' savagees.' Savage women that wear feathers, he say; an' paint themselfs an' stick leetle bright peebles all over themselfs. An' the men, he say, are like animals that have servants to wash an' feed them like monkeys in a beeg zoo. He say his foolish sister want heem to get good entertainors, an' I beg heem to let me come an' dance. It make fun, I tol' heem. 'An' you come,' he say. I am here!"

"So I see. Yes. I believe that. But from where did you come, Javotte?"

She hesitated, then—

"My home."

"Ah, really? And are you a poor little shop-girl or an Italian countess incognito? You could pass for a princess easily. I don't know what your pose is, but Holder probably knows all about it. Knows it's the money you're after, and doesn't care. I can understand that. You'd bring a good price in any slave-market. In the Orient some man gets the money, but in the New York markets each slave sells herself.

"Folly comes high, but from my meager experience I would say you are worth it. And rich boys must expect to pay the price just as long as the devil makes little girls like you for men to play with."

Then the man's voice changed; it was still polite, but the irony was gone and there was menace:

"But don't *marry* him. Do you hear?"

Javotte drew in her breath hissingly between clenched teeth, and every muscle was set as if to spring. More forcibly than if she had spoken, her whole attitude conveyed the desperate wish to see the face behind that mask.

She edged a little closer.

"Who are you to say that to me, an' why you say eet?"

He lifted an automatic from his pocket but made no threat of gesture as he said:

"No, Javotte. Just keep a respectful distance. Little girls mustn't pull the vizors from bad men's faces."

She moved back. There was something that she didn't understand about this fellow that made her fearful; and she did not greatly fear anything, so she had always believed.

The man was examining her jewels again, and slipping a ring on the tip of a little finger studied it:

"Holder got this of Drount, didn't he? Excellent jeweler, Drount. This necklace—" he dangled it appraisingly—"it will make a fine plaything for some starving child. A fine Christian world this, when babies die of withered bellies because a lot of— Did Holder really call them *savagees?*"

He paused, his head half-turned in sudden alertness, and a silencing finger raised.

A woman in a room down the hall was yelling—

"Jewels—thieves—o-ow!"

"Don't *you* join in this chorus," he said with quiet menace, putting out the light.

Javotte stood motionless, suddenly afraid that the man would be caught, pinned up in her room. She was more terrified now than she had been before. If she got a police grilling everybody, or almost everybody, would be sure that she was an accomplice.

It was dark and silent within the room. She heard the key rasp delicately. He had the sensitive touch of a safe-man. She sensed rather than felt the draft as he opened the door. The faintest of sounds, some sort of vague movement—she wasn't sure whether he had stepped through into the hall or merely closed the door again.

She crouched breathless, waiting.

People were stirring; voices were lifted.

A thin line glowed under the door; a hall light had been turned on.

Instantly there was a shot.

Then the high, cold cry of, "Hands up!"

The voice seemed very distant. The man had moved away from her door before the light came on.

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III

NEW YORK is greatly bored by yesterday's news, but it chattered three or four days about the Louden house-party.

It was good newspaper stuff. There were two or three good angles; and as every millionaire is a society man to the police reporter, a stranger reading the paper would have thought that the Holders and Loudens were part and parcel of the old Dutch crowd.

There had been a lot of stealable stuff lying around, and the robber had got away with much of it before he began shooting up the place.

Somewhere around four o'clock, or a little later, of the very dark and slightly chilly morning, a woman crawled out of bed with what she later described as a nervous headache. She was after the bromo and felt pretty shaky.

Always she slept with her jewels under her pillow. Always.

"Something" caused her to feel to see if they were there. They weren't. She looked about, saw that things had been disturbed, knew that her room had been entered while she slept; and she began to yell.

The intuitive "something" gave her a chill at the thought of dashing out into the hall, so she beat on her own door and yelled for help.

It is pretty hard to get people out of sodden sleep. They can be very much disturbed without fully awakening, and many of the guests slumbered heavily.

Fussy little Louden prided himself on his cellar.

Somebody, one of the more bold or more incautious men, dashed into the hall and happened to know where the light-switch was. He turned it on, and nearly dropped dead.

At once he saw the masked figure; and at once the bandit shot, then cried—

"Hands up!"

It was thought that the robbers shot to keep everybody intimidated; and everybody agreed that he did. After the first shot nobody was in a hurry to pop out into the hall.

"Back in your room!" he had ordered.

The incautious man vanished.

Bang—bang—bang!

"Lock all doors!"

Bang—bang!

"The first man I see is dead!"

Bang—bang—bang-bang—bang!

He made as much noise as a battle. Bullets went in every direction. The hall lights were shot out. Then, abruptly, silence.

Nothing more was seen or heard of the robber.

From the first shot until the silence had not taken more than two minutes, if all of that.

It was three or four minutes, probably nearer five or six, before the discreet watchman edged up the stairs from below, or before anybody ventured out into the hall of the left wing.

What had happened, no one could say. An automatic was found, emptied, in the hall.

The fellow had vanished.

That was not all the vanishing that was done. The sun had not been up very long when it was discovered, while a count of noses was being taken, that the mysterious dancer, Javotte Murilla, had disappeared.

All effort to locate her or to imagine where she might be located failed. She had disappeared in haste, leaving all of her belongings. Her bed had not been slept in. A dismantled automatic in her room increased the complexity of the mystery. It was certain that she had fled wearing her costume of black under the long dark velvet cloak. It was thought impossible that she could have made off in an auto without being seen.

The detectives who came down from the city that morning did not even try to look wise. They scratched their heads and swore under their breath, for it is always unsatisfactory to work out a mystery among a lot of rich ginks. They don't like to be torn open and pinned down with questions. They lie to conceal any little personal matter; for, being rich, they have nothing much to fear if they are caught in the lie, though it may have balled up the case.

Two of the detectives were from Headquarters, and one was Matty Murdock, a private detective that Holder sent for. He had used Murdock on several occasions and liked him.

The detectives quickly decided that the explanation centered in this Javotte Murilla.

They got in touch with the theatrical agency which had supplied the entertainers; but the agency knew nothing of any Javotte Murilla.

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It appeared that she had slipped into the troupe; and no doubt with an accomplice had put over the robbery. The fact that she had kept her face concealed made everybody think that she was a well-known crook; and the Headquarters men appealed to the Italian Squad to do its duty.

It was an insoluble mystery as to how she and the accomplice could have escaped. He had not run down-stairs, for the watchman, aroused by the shots, was on the lookout. He had not run upstairs, for people aroused there were hanging over the banisters. He could not have jumped out of the hall window.

So the detectives guessed that he had ducked back into Javotte Murilla's room; and the two of them had watched for a chance to make off amid the confusion of guests and servants.

The detectives were baffled; but these Headquarters men did not stand still and twiddle their thumbs. They examined all of the automatics for finger-prints and found nothing satisfactory.

They went over Javotte's room with a fine-tooth comb and discovered the stub of a cigaret of another kind than the package on her dressing-table. Not much of it had been smoked.

It complicated matters to discover that the cigaret was one of a brand smoked by Demaine.

Demaine was one of the three unmarried men that happened to occupy a guest room in the west wing. He was a gay juvenile rake, rich, genial and drunken; and had been put to bed soused.

He was hardly sober at ten A.M. when the detectives got to him.

They were up against such questions as this: Had Demaine gone to the dancer's room; or had somebody entered his room and stolen one cigaret; or had this somebody found the cigaret; or wasn't Demaine so silly and drunken as he appeared and had he raised —— in the hall, scaring everybody half out of their wits, so he would have the chance to slip back into his room, undress, crawl into bed and pretend to have been aroused out of a drunken sleep?

It is a wonder that all detectives do not end their days in padded cells, balancing Chinese puzzles on the ends of their noses.

The fellows from Headquarters were sane and hard-headed. They looked all around, listened, asked questions. Matty Murdock, for whom they had a little more use than the police usually have for private detectives kept out of sight much of the time and in the background the rest of it.

Merwin Middleton had a room across the hall from Demaine.

He told the same stories as the others about being awakened by shots.

"Didn't have more of a weapon than a button-hook—an' I didn't come out of the late war with any medals for bravery," he said with a faint apologetic air, glancing steadily into the hard, scrutinizing face of first one and then the other detective. "Have one?"

He offered his thin silver case, and each of the detectives took a cigaret, whiffed it, put it aside, and watched Middleton inhale deeply.

Later one said to the other:

"These rich guys are the limit. What they don't do to themselves!"

Middleton's cigarets were made of tobacco soaked in opium.

Carl Karmondy had a room two doors below Middleton.

Karmondy, by right of birth, was somebody. He had good blood. His mother had been a DeVoorbilt or some such person. He was eligible to membership in the St. Nicholas Club. Those who liked the dark alert type considered him handsome; and he led a sort of picturesque and dashing existence, gambled, made love, mingled with all kinds of people, and knew a lot of Tenderloin Café entertainers by their first names.

He treated the detectives with an air of tolerant familiarity:

"Dev'lish fix for a fellow to be in. Rather flattering though. Wouldn't mind having that fellow's nerve. He's in a class with that boy, the Black Wolf. I'll tell the world he is. Don't you think?

"Say now, there is no use being gentle with me. I know it sort of simmers down to Demaine, Middleton and me, and——"

He laughed easily, raising his hands in an attitude of submission to a search.

"Go as far as you like—search my room first to start the ball rolling if you like. But that girl can tell you a lot. You know, I had suspicions about her from the first. I think she worked with somebody from the inside. Want to take a little look through my room? Go right ahead."

But the detectives hastened to shake their heads and look uninterested; but when

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Karmondy went down to breakfast they went through his room with rapid thoroughness, as they had gone through Middleton's. Nothing was disturbed, yet they got into every nook and corner.

They did find a hypodermic needle with pellets of cocain which had been concealed behind the molding that ran near the ceiling.

Said one Headquarters man to the other:

"The Demaine kid's a souse. The other's a hophead. This one's a coke fiend. An' some people wonders why policemen haven't any respect for human nature."

It was not long before the detectives decided that it would be wise perhaps to go a little thoroughly into Mr. Merwin Middleton's position and ways of life. They tried to be tactful about it, for they had nothing suspicious on him except that he had no ancestors to vouch for him, as Karmondy had, and nothing was known of his family. He had been living at a good club, but he wasn't very well known in the set.

The guests quickly got an inkling of the way the detectives had their eyes pointed, and talked among themselves. As one woman expressed it:

"Since the waah anybody can get intew sosighity. Somebody you don't know hardly a-tall picks you up an' pahsses you on. This Mid'ton boy—nice boy, seems like; but Ah ask, who is his fam'ly?"

Before cotton hit the moon she had never dreamed of being picked up herself and passed on in any sort of New York society.

FUSSY little Louden, his side-whiskers vibrant with emotion, explained—

"The Detmers——"

He eyed the detectives challengingly as he mentioned the delectable name of Detmer. The detectives had never heard of the Detmers, but they were apparently important people in Louden's scheme of things.

"Middleton is a relative of theirs."

The detectives explained in turn that they were suspecting no one. They were only trying to get as much information as possible. And who were the Detmers?

"Detmer!"

Little Louden was almost shocked at such lack of familiarity with the great ones of the world.

Detmer was a Wall Street broker; a fast old boy, too. He was on a trip to the Orient, a pleasure trip. Decided on it at a moment's notice. At the last minute he had called up to tell Louden good-by; and had said:

"Oh, by the way, I've got a nephew in town. The kid's pretty lonesome, I guess. I'll give him a letter to you if you want. . . . . No? That's good of you, Louden. Ask him about a bit, will you? Do something for you, sometime."

Thereupon Detmer had told all about Merwin Middleton and Louden had got in touch with him and introduced him around and had him out. Louden hadn't known that Detmer thought so much of him. The side-whiskers stiffened a little proudly.

Now it happens detectives are popularly supposed to accomplish their work by the exercise of two marvelous faculties. On one side is a microscopic observation and abnormal powers of deduction, so that by looking at a mosquito's bill any real detective can tell the age and sex of the person last bitten; and on the other side is the great gift of hunches. A hunch is an idea that has no perceptible reason for existing; and it is usually wrong, but like the tales of fortune-tellers, only the times when the guesses were right are remembered.

A real detective, with inextinguishable patience and almost mechanical gesture, probes every source of information. He picks up a fact here, carries it over there to somebody else and asks the next party to look it over, to study this fact, and say what he knows of it. And so on and so on, with an endless chain of questions, and an indefatigable gathering of facts until the criminal is nailed or the clues vanish in blind alleys.

One of the detectives called up Detmer's office, thinking perhaps some one would know something about the nephew. And he was a very astonished detective in about two minutes, for a heavy voice came in on the phone with:

"What's all this about? . . . *I* am Detmer. . . . Nephew? I haven't any nephews. . . . Who. Middleton? Mid-dle-ton? Never heard of him. Louden? That fussy little peewee—no; —— no!"

The Headquarters men came out of the library looking very calm and uninterested for people who felt much like hunters that hear the moose crashing through the underbrush before them.

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They couldn't arrest anybody just then, but they wanted to get Middleton under their eyes and have a little talk with him, quite a little talk in fact.

"He was in on this all right. Him an' the girl," expressed the opinion of both officers.

The first person they met was Frank Holder as he came down the stairs unhurriedly. He had had breakfast served in his room, to which he retired shortly after the commotion at dawn; and much of the morning had been spent with Matty Murdock in the cupola at the top of the house. Holder, though heavy on his feet, did not seem to mind the stairs; and seemed to like the view.

"Did you happen to see Mr. Middleton about any place?" they asked.

Holder eyed them wearily, and was slow of response though he said:

"I just passed him—un—in the hall. At the head of the stairs."

They seemed to sense a certain unfriendliness in his manner, or it may have been just his manner. They had heard that he was "funny." And they may have been keyed up to feel unfriendliness because he had brought down the private detective, Murdock.

"By the way, Mr. Holder. Have you known Middleton long?"

Holder looked from one to the other then answered:

"No. I can't say that I know him at all. I have looked at him. Unm."

"He isn't what you would call a friend, then?"

"Un. Friend? No. Hardly that. I've spoken to him— un—maybe twice."

And when Holder had gone into the library they said to themselves—

"Queer duck."

The guests moved around bored and dispirited, most of them making ready to leave right after lunch. They discussed the robbery, sympathized, a wee bit pleased with those who had been plundered, and yawned in the face of Louden, who trotted about importantly, lamenting the affair but enjoying the sensation.

"Let's talk it over with Louden—and keep an eye on Middleton," said the detectives.

Louden was agitated at the news. He and the two Headquarters' men went into the library and they told Holder all about it. Holder, ponderous, heavy, listened watchfully.

The detectives, good judges of human nature, began to feel this man was anything but stupid. They put him down for one of those silent, watchful fellows who say little and do the unexpected.

Louden chattered excited. He was astounded. He telephoned Detmer himself, and Detmer, who seemed to have something of a Bernard's tolerance for a busy little poodle, rather roughly joked him for being taken in by a crook. Detmer was one of the spendthrifts of the world that keep the fleshpots bubbling, a sport, a broker making his money off gamblers just as much as any joint-keeper that ever reached out for the rake-off. Louden, like many people, felt it something of an honor to have him for a friend; for Louden was one of those unfortunates, always eager to be "in" on things, to be in the swim, to be important among his friends.

"—but they imitated your voice—your name. I never hesitated to accept him. Dreadful——"

"Say!"

Detmer was suddenly interested.

"I bet he's the fellow that went through my house about six weeks ago. I remember now—the night of the robbery some friends were in and we talked about a trip to the Orient.

"Louden, I'll be apologizing pretty soon for running that crook in on you. You're right in the fashion to have a burglar visit you. Look out that he doesn't send in a bill for services. Must have had the combination to my safe."

The detectives began to be a little excited when this conversation was made clear to them; and Louden acted like a man with a nervous chill. The side-whiskers quivered.

"He came in a roadster, eh? Send somebody out to the garage and stall the engine, so if he makes a break. Oh, we've got him. He hasn't come down from up-stairs. I've kept an eye on the hall. Shall we collar him?"

They looked toward Holder.

Before Holder answered, Matty Murdock came down the stairs and into the library. He stood expectantly, waiting.

"What is it, Murdock?"

"Mr. Holder sent for me."

They looked toward Holder, who sat motionless, watching Murdock. After a pause he said—

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"I sent for you?"

"The butler telephoned."

Holder did not move an eye-lash as he asked—

"Butler?"

"Yes. He said. 'Mr. Holder asks if you can come right down.' Why, didn't you?"

Louden was rubbing his hands and rising on his toes; his face twitched; the ends of the whiskers seemed to curl up and straighten out nervously.

"No," said Holder.

"Why would anybody do that?" asked one of the Headquarters men.

The other one looked mystified.

"Well," said Holder wearily, "tell Murdock what is up."

They told him. Excitement grew on the officers. This fellow was a big catch. And he was up-stairs in his room. Holder had met him just a little while before in the hall. He had not come down.

But he would use a gun. They had better get him down-stairs, in the library, before he suspected anything.

"Send one of the servants up. Say he's wanted on the phone. Long distance," suggested a Headquarters man.

"And the butler," said Murdock. "What about that message?"

There were telephones in some of the rooms and a small switchboard, but no regular operator.

"There was no message," said Holder.

A Jap boy was called and given the message for Middleton; and while he was being instructed Murdock came close to Holder and said:

"I locked the door—carefully. But I had better get back up there, don't you think?"

Holder said:

"Wait. No one can get in. Wouldn't be surprized though if the fellow didn't think I had something worth taking. Thorough workman. Unh. Very."

The boy went up with his message, and the men waited in preoccupied silence. One of the detectives sat near the doorway, watching it steadily out of the corners of his eyes. Murdock, a fellow whose features were rather angles and bumps in the Highland manner, stood near Holder's chair.

Louden fidgeted. Holder impassively looked from one man to another. Something about his eyes might have given the impression of being a little amused if one had watched closely. Every one else was on a strain, tense.

Two or three minutes went by.

The detectives changed position a time or two. One muttered to the other. Louden said something, but his mouth was so dry he could hardly articulate. Murdock pretended an interest in the titles of a row of books behind Holder's chair, and Holder enigmatically looked from one to another of the men.

A Headquarters man stood up.

"What's the matter with that Jap?"

"Give him time."

"Time! It's been five minutes. I'm going up and take a look."

"Could Middleton have got on to us?"

"Don't see how. But what's become of that Jap?"

"We'd better take a walk up that way," and he motioned toward Murdock, who crossed the room. "We're goin' up, Matty."

Louden was on his feet, almost jumping up and down with:

"Will he shoot? Will he shoot? Do you think he will shoot?"

"You'd better stay here, Mr. Louden," said one of the police detectives.

Holder did not say anything and did not move, but he was unmistakably smiling at Louden's excitment.

The three detectives went up the stairs, walking with very self-conscious effort to appear casual about it.

At the top of the stairs they peered down the hall; then one went ahead. They reached the west wing, and again paused. Again one went on, and walked slowly past Middleton's room, listening as he went by; then stopped, and shook his head. He had heard nothing.

Murdock and the other police detective came up, stopped before the door, knocked.

No answer.

They knocked again, hard.

No answer.

They tried the door. It opened. They crowded in.

On the floor lay the Jap boy, gagged and bound, with a gash on his head.

"He's gone!"

"——!"

"Quick—he can't have got off. Don't let a machine leave the grounds!"

And in thirty seconds the house was buzzing like a hive and the search was on.

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IV

IN HOLDER'S rooms at the top of the house from which the detective Murdock had been called in some mystifying purpose, there was little to suggest the wealthy man of leisure.

These three rooms, including a turret-like affair, had been set aside for him. His sister and Louden insisted, rather importunately in fact, upon his treating their country place as his own; which, if people always got what they paid for, it really was.

But such weighing of credit and debit did not interest him. Though he lived simply himself, he was capable of all sorts of extravagances. Presents he made his sisters were made with the blundering costliness of the man who is generous, not discriminating. Money values did not seem to attract his attention, which was one of the reasons he was suspected of being stupid.

He had none of the interests that rich men usually have, giving little thought to business and none to sport; and what he called pleasure seemed to be a Buddhistic survey of the people round about while he smoked a long black cigar. He lived at a hotel practically the year through, and was thought to spend most of his time in the lobby, half sunk from sight in a deep padded chair, watching the crowds sift in and out from the street.

Crowds, just crowds, were his fascination.

He and his family had come into New York three or four years previously on a flood of gold. The old father's barren land was found to be the thin earth crust above a sea of oil, and the family of Texans, hardened for two generations on the plains, came new-rich into the hysteric city of Gotham.

At times Holder had been thought a little off. Certainly he was not bright and smart; but would sit inactive for long stretches of time, and talked little. As years went by the father began to feel that Frank, if not the brightest fellow in the world, was the most dependable. He was almost dangerously without vices—the father belonged to the old generation which thought youth should have its acreage of wild oats.

The old man—he was one of those ponderous plainsmen that traveled in a buckboard rather than a saddle—often said:

"He's a steady boy. But if Frank ever does make a fool o' hisself he'll be a whole lunatic asylum."

After the exodus to New York it was the father who came nearest to filling the asylum. His wife was dead, but he had two daughters; and after the first novelty of spending money had worn off they developed an interest in social castes. The father, as fathers have a way of doing, insisted that his family was as good as anybody's; and he began to grow interested in the way of the Knickerbockers.

He became pathetically unsatisfied. Fondly generous, he wanted his family to have whatever they wanted. Money poured in upon him with tidal vastness. He, used to the thrift of the plains, did not know anything of that exquisite art, spending money; and he would go to his daughters begging them to ask him for something.

With money it is no trouble at all to get into a social set that differs hardly at all from the genuine thing except in the matter of genealogy; and the father encouraged the effort. He acted much the same as he had acted with the children at a country fair after selling his cattle on a rising market; but he soon began to feel the effect of rich food and the sustained excitement of the maddest of cities.

He died suddenly, leaving everything to his son Frank, and solemnly adjuring him regarding the care of the family and the establishment of a family name. The old man had seen that ancestors were the most necessary things in acquiring social status, and an outcropping of one vain phase of human nature gave him pleasure in the thought of being the founder of a social dynasty. He had looked a hundred years ahead and seen great-great-grandchildren mightily proud of him.

The burden of wealth never fell on shoulders more fitted to ignore it. Frank Holder continued to live in a state of unexcited patience, dully scrutinizing the endless flow of people.

His sisters, embittered by friends who sympathized venomously, at first tried to treat him as if he had done them great injustice in being the chief beneficiary of the will; but they soon came round to a sort of hypocritical humbleness. In other words they began the game of working him, then gradually assumed bullying attitudes and demanded.

He would not divide the estate; but he

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denied them nothing, though he seemed to have no interest at all in what they wanted.

Whether they were angry, humble or bullying did not appear to change his manner, which was heavy, awkward, stupid; but they knew there was a hidden personality within him, and at times it made them a little uneasy. They had a ring through the nose of this bear, but if the bear ever turned on them— They trembled when they wondered just what was behind that heavy face.

Helena, the elder, married Louden, who had already buried one wife and divorced another. He was a fossilized remnant of Revolutionary ancestors, and she was very glad to get him.

Later Jessica, younger and not so fat, married into the DeBrooms, whose grandfathers had helped cheat the Indians out of Manhattan. They naturally looked frowningly down upon the upstart Loudens.

The DeBroom that Jessica—she was christened Jessie—married was a wild-eyed wastrel who had brought a lot of scandal upon the family and much ill health upon himself. His family were grateful enough to recognize Jessica as something a little better than a nurse for their son; but it was made plain that they would not recognize the impossible Loudens. For a hundred years they had been stepping on the fingers of Louden climbers, and they were not going to let this last of the tribe sneak into their citadel.

But her brother, Holder, that good, honest and unpretentious fellow—well, he was her brother. Of course she could not forget him. The DeBrooms permitted him to be introduced to them informally; and were shocked almost into paralysis at his stolid and utter boorishness. Nothing impressed him; he was immobile, indifferent. He grunted when spoken to.

DeBroom later offered to assist him as financial advisor and suggested some very attractive investments; but Holder was uninterested.

The sisters, having become implacable social enemies, treated the brother as the spoils of war. Each tried to get as much out of him as possible, and pretended a greater affection than the other had.

Oddly enough, he was passive and impassive. He never said a word of reproach to either of them, and he listened to their complaints as indifferently as if all the while thinking of something else.

He was impenetrable. People who knew him best knew little about him; but his bankers suspected him of having a sense of humor, for had he not once said when they recommended some woolen-mills bonds:

"Employ foreigners mostly, don't they? Un? Twelve hours. And children, foreign children, don't they? Work 'em to death. Little foreign devils. What right they got in America? Unh?"

The assistant manager of the bond department smiled pleasantly. Customers had such queer senses of humor.

In the matter of women. Holder was still an enigma. There are in any city any number of women of any class and caste, all sizes, shapes, manners and prices. But Holder was not visibly interested. Each of his sisters, in the rivalry of being good to him, forced him into introductions; and as the only way that a boor is ever made unobjectionable is with gilt, the enormous wealth that he controlled was revealed to the friends. In that way his stolidity and impassivity was partially recognized as originality.

"Ah, *so* original!"

It would be too much to say that he did enjoy himself at Louden's parties. The DeBrooms would not have him to parties, but occasionally let him meet some of their friends. Young DeBroom knew a rotten lot. Holder watched, listened, sometimes spoke but usually grunted.

Holder was too rich not to be eyed appraisingly; and to the horror of his sisters and the consternation of Louden and DeBroom they had recently received word from his own lips that he had found the girl whom he thought he would marry.

None of his relatives wanted him married; but if so, each wanted to pick out the bride. And who was this creature?

The assistant manager of the bond department had not been far wrong in suspecting Holder of having a little humor. He said to his sisters with rather too apparent simplicity, that she was a little orphan girl he had taken an interest in. He said her name was Aliza.

" 'Liza!" said the consumptive DeBroom. "Lord, I bet she's a mulatto!"

Who was she? Where had he met her?

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What of her family? Marry? Marry somebody he didn't know a thing about? Oh the disgrace of it!

HELENA LOUDEN and Jessica DeBroom patched up a working truce between the families so they might the better campaign against this unknown raider who was about to steal away their dear brother.

They cornered him and wept. Some horrid creature was imposing on his innocence. It was unendurable. They did so want to love his wife, but if he took up with a mere nobody—! He should think of them, of their social position. Who was this girl anyway?

Holder, awkward of speech, slow, but watchful, said—

"I met her in a café."

Aghast, the sisters groaned in unison.

"She was—unh—un—working there."

They did not shriek. Their vocal chords were paralyzed along with the rest of themselves.

He waited patiently for them to say something, then repeated:

"Working there. Unh. Yes."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Louden.

"A waitress!" cried Mrs. DeBroom.

That must have been what Holder was waiting for, because he answered quickly:

"That is what your mother was. Unh."

Groans, with hands to eyes.

"Bee-hive restaurant. R'member, father used to tease her. Said—un—said she made eyes at him. You girls at home used to wait table."

"Oh, but Frank!" Helena wailed.

"Conditions were different. Everything was different," said Jessica.

"We're trying to forget all that," Helena blurted.

"My husband—he would never, never forgive me if I let such a creature into the family."

"Oh, poor Mr. Louden is distracted," Helena echoed.

Holder in an unpleasant sort of way appeared to be grinning; and he said:

"You each picked out—unh—picked out what you wanted to marry. I'll do the same."

"Working there!" Jessica mumbled.

"We call 'em hashers in Texas," said Holder.

"Uah! No pride, no taste!"

"You girls—unh—you ought to be awfully proud—un—proud of your taste in husbands. Unh-n!"

The sisters must have felt that they were getting perilously close to the dangerous creature that lurked behind his mask, for on the instant they checked reproaches and took to tears, lots of tears.

This brought him around somewhat. After all he was a mere man, and when his women wept he was miserable; or else there was something cynical rather than comforting in the way he brought out the little black check-book folder and scribbled laboriously the name of first one then the other sister.

"Please, won't you let us meet her?"

"Un—unh. Some time. Of course. Unh. Soon. Yes."

He answered wearily, like a Titan tired of the human show, bored, worn out.

The two families consulted together. At last Loudens mingled with DeBrooms.

Said young DeBroom, coughing amid the smoke of his cigaret:

"The only thing to do is to put a detective on his trail. Find out who this girl is. Scare her off. Buy her off. Leave her—" *cough—cough—cough*—"leave her to me."

Louden rubbed his withered hands together and answered echoingly:

"A detective. That's it. He's been deceiving us."

DeBroom had the thin peaked face—as if old parchment were stretched over a frame—and dark hot eyes of insatiable dissipation. His health was ruined; he was gone, a total wreck; but desires, love of riotous nights, an eagerness for mad hilarity, were strong in him.

He was one of those fellows that everybody recognizes as utterly worthless, yet he was not devoid of charm. He might be dying, but he was polite, his pain was never too much for him to lose a certain graciousness of manner, a little cynical perhaps, but not envenomed; yet selfish, utterly selfish in the pride that it gave him to play the game of manners out. He had no honor, no morals, only manners. In his day he had arranged many a wild mad orgy; and panting asthmatic amid couch cushions, smoking, inhaling all the while, he brooded rememberingly on drunken parties filled with strange women.

DeBroom was two years below thirty, but, eaten out with pain, he would smile

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with thin colorless lips and indomitably say:

"*Vixi!* I have lived!"

He was also saying unconsciously—

"I am dead!"

He knew all the evilness there was to be known of the city—the great, uncouth, glittering, passionate harlot of a city that squats voraciously by the eastern gateway of America.

He said, smiling with the fleshless line that made his mouth, straining huskily to bring the words out, yet tolerantly:

"Brother Frank has been putting something over on us. We thought he was a sort of—"*cough—cough*—"pardon me; this beastly cold!—we thought he was a sort of Saint Stylites—you know, the old boy that put in forty years on a sort of smoke-stack to get away from the women. But"—*cough—cough*— "——! Ah, I beg your pardon. But Brother Frank is no such fool."

And DeBroom indulged in an unprintable jest at his brother-in-law's expense.

Louden laughed almost convulsively, wrinkling his thin dry face, setting the side-whiskers to vibrating; but the sisters looked blank, mystified. They saw nothing to laugh about, nothing in the situation that lent itself to humor; and laughter that they did not understand made them uneasy. When there was laughter they did not understand they were never sure that it was not at themselves.

DeBroom, unflattered by Louden's elaborate appreciation of the poor pun, eyed him with cryptic amusement.

"You see," he went on. "Holder is a man. I mean—"*cough*—"a man—mere man."

He smiled into the blank faces.

"I mean—" he was graciously explanatory—"he likes—"*cough—cough*"—he likes the ladies."

"I've never seen him look at one!" said Mrs. Louden, who always gave the impression of blurting when she was eager to get in a word.

"Never!" said Mrs. DeBroom.

"But ah!" said Louden vaguely, not quite sure of what DeBroom's theory would be and wishing to agree with him.

"But ah! is right, Louden."

Louden beamed.

"You see Holder knows he is awkward, and women make him uncomfortable—" *cough*—"the women he meets in your—our—homes. He thinks he doesn't know how to handle them, so he takes refuge in being—ah—in grunting at them. They don't—" *Cough—cough—cough*— "This is the worst cold I ever had. He hasn't met any women that made him feel comfortable. He feels self-conscious, so he pretends to be indifferent, cold. But he has wandered down into some cabaret and some little entertainer——"

"A waitress, he said. Oh!"

"No—"*cough—cough*"—no, my dear, not a waitress. Some singer or dancer. Some little kittenish flapper, some cuddling, cooing kitten of a girl"—*cough*—"that jumped right on to his lap, threw her arms about him. squeezed him tighter than he was ever squeezed in his life, kissed—"*cough—cough*—"kissed him. And, how they can kiss, those stray little devils! These Saint Stylites'—like Holder—when they fall it is clear from the top of the pillar." *Cough. Cough.*

"Oh, I'd like to choke her!" said the robust Mrs. Louden.

"Some awful creature!" said Mrs. DeBroom. "Threw herself right at him."

"How can women do such things!" cried Mrs. Louden, indignant.

Louden looked mutely wise. He had a few memories of his own youth, of second childhood too perhaps.

"We must—"

"*Cough—cough—cough.* DeBroom could scarcely go on.

"We must—find—the woman."

A private detective agency was put on Holder's trail, and it learned what DeBroom had suspected—that Holder was far from being the simple, dull person that he appeared. He went about at night a little mysteriously for a rich man with no one to answer to. He evidently had low tastes, and went down into foreign quarters a good deal, down around Kenmare and Mott, among Italians.

He was usually accompanied by a fellow by the name of Murdock, a private detective. Murdock was not, said the report of the rival agency, much good as a detective or as a citizen. He was known to be in love with a crook girl, a pickpocket, one Dolly Devore whose lover was a gunman, a bad actor.

They learned that Holder was well known if not in the underworld at least in that shadowed world, the foreign quarter. He had friendships with shopkeepers. He met

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men in back rooms. It looked as if a lot of grafters had got hold of him.

He often wrote checks, and these foreigners treated him with that friendly eagerness always shown to a sucker. It was hard to find out anything. The foreigners were suspicious and secretive.

"This is—"*cough—cough—cough—cough—cough*—"serious," said DeBroom as he finished the report and leaned back panting amid the billowy heap of satin cushions.

He was wrapped in a dressing-gown of brocaded silk, and though the day was hot he shivered at times, chilled from marrow-bones of ice. Then his dry parchment skin would burn as if fire glowed beneath it.

"I wonder," thought DeBroom, "what mess he is into?"

DeBroom knew every form of excitment and dissipation; he had experimented with them all, and the follies and degeneracies of one age do not differ from those of another.

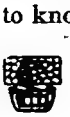
They had no libel laws in Rome. The old satirists risked their necks and spoke. With all the modern faculty and facility for publicity, nobody risks a libel suit. Juvenal would have starved to death on Newspaper Row. The symbol dominating the doorway into the present-day editors' offices should be a modestly clothed figure with finger to lips, and at the bottom of the pedestal the legend, "Shh-hh-h-!"

DeBroom knew there was all kinds of Old World vice to be found around in the foreign quarters; and it was inconceivable to him that an idle man with money would pursue anything but vice, particularly when he slipped about at night with a private detective for a guide.

"Known from the first there was something wrong with that fellow; and if he gets in among a lot of Tenderloin degenerates—with his money!"

DeBroom snapped his fingers, signifying the end.

"They'll never give him up. We've got to know what's up. Got to."



WHEN Mrs. Louden planned her house-party at the country place she invited her sister, Mrs. DeBroom; but DeBroom's health was worse—so she said anyway.

But DeBroom, who knew human nature, or at least one side of it said:

"You make brother Frank engage—" *cough—cough*—"the entertainers. Make *him*. Leave it to him." *Cough-cough-cough*. "Make him feel your party will be ruined if he doesn't. He'll tell this girl about it and ask her advice." *Cough—cough-cough-cough*. "I would like to boil all doctors in oil!

"And if that little cabaret entertainer doesn't do another thing in her life, she'll make him let her come. She wouldn't miss a chance like that for a million. She'll be among those present, looking you all over, saying—"*cough-cough—*

" 'If you only knew! Aha, I'll have this bunch eating out of my hand in a little while.'

"Watch him closely. Watch the women too. Get some rounder like Karmondy or Demaine to keep their eyes peeled. She will be there—among the entertainers."

And she was.

THE terrifying commotion made by the robber upset the house completely just before dawn; and Javotte was very much frightened.

She knew that when the police came there would be questions, and no mask worn. But escape was impossible.

However, Holder was a calm figure among the excited, agitated, wildly speculating group. He had come down in dressing-gown and slippers, listened, asked a question or two; and Javotte, who stood almost frozen with fear by her door, soon recognized that the gentle tapping was a signal she could not ignore.

She opened the door slightly; and Holder said that she was to go boldly right down the hall and up the stairs. All the servants, he said, had been called; and there was not a person but had come to find out what was happening. She was to go clear up to his rooms, and go in; then lock the door and wait; but to go at once.

"You must not be found."

Javotte went; and in the excitment she was not noticed even if seen. People in all shapes and stages of undress were running about, up and down, in and out of rooms.

She came into a large, circular room, the turret overlooking the country; and she hastily closed and locked the door, alarmed by the impression that something was reaching out at her, much as a child flees out of the darkened room if its head is full of ogres.

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She breathed pantingly, through excitement rather than exertion, for she was strong of body, accustomed to difficult dances; and she stood looking about helplessly, with that overpowering sense of being captured which every woman feels when pressed into a man's strange rooms.

She felt like a thief, a fugitive, whose footfall might be heard; and she moved cautiously, ears strained for the dreaded approach of steps. The thought, "how will I ever get out?" came to her over and over. She knew that, having disappeared, she would be watched for, talked about; but she would have done any desperate thing for the chance to keep from being seen, recognized.

The large semicircle room seemed to her almost barren. There was nothing personal in it. Just a blue-and-white rug, white reed furniture, a long table, a lounge chair, a small picture or two, a newspaper and nothing more. There was something more—two books were on the table. One was Bercovici's "Crimes of Charity;" the other was some kind of a government report.

Two rooms opened off of it, one on each side of the entrance; and she ventured to peep through both closed doors. One was the bedroom out of which Holder had just been roused; and the other was simply a room with two chairs, a purplish rug and curtains.

She shuddered.

"Eet is horrible!"

When Holder came up, weary, unhurried, she rushed at him with a flood of questions.

He chuckled almost without sound, his heavy body shaking.

"I've wondered," he said slowly, each word falling as if by itself, "what some of those women looked like. I mean before they got in their disguises. One had sticking plaster all over——"

"Wrinkle eradicators," said Javotte.

"And a harness. Another one wore a baseball mask."

"But the robber—did they catch him?"

"Unh? Catch him? Un. Down in Texas there's a fellow—Jeb Hawkins. If you got in reach of his voice—un—he had a voice—he would point out himself to you as a man that captured Bad Bill Blevins. Un.

"Bad Bill and a partner held up a saloon. The partner entered the back door first, and scared Hawkins so bad he bolted and bumped into Bad Bill, who was just coming through the front door. Knocked Bad Bill clear out. None of the men around here would catch that fellow except as Hawkins caught Bad Bill."

Big, his bulkiness increased by the folds of the dressing-gown, he loomed like a colossus in the room. There was something, even with the awkwardness, like dignity in his slowness, his unhurried movement and speech. Javotte realized that he must have immense power, and that he was massively built; but it gave her a sense of fear rather than security.

Again she felt, as she often felt momentarily, a touch of uneasiness because she knew that she did not know just what was inside of this man. What she really believed of him seemed almost too good to be true; for she knew a lot about the human animal.

Women hate mystery in the character of the man. If they do not intuitively understand him, and they usually do if they wish, they instinctively dislike him. That is why the man is always at a disadvantage, if not helpless, when he plays the game of love gallantly; he is an amateur at best, using the duelist's chosen weapons; and no man breaks from an entanglement without being pretty much of a brute.

And Javotte, being a wise young woman, was disturbed because she knew that she did not intuitively or any other way quite understand this man who was so curiously stolid of feature and watchful of eye. The real man was ambushed down inside of him, and she was a little afraid; but the last thing that either pride or good sense would have let her do was to show to him any of this fear.

"How—how will I ever get away?" she begged.

He had looked down at her, waited as if turning thoughts slowly about, and said:

"I already sent in a call for Murdock to come right down. He can get you out—after dark. And home. I thought of that."

She embraced him a little feverishly, for there was much gratitude in her heart.

"I love you!" she said. "Oh, I do *love* you."

He wrapped her in an arm thick as a python's body, and she pushed against him with the momentary sensation of being suffocated, crushed. But he did not squeeze tightly; the pressure was gentle, and he did

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not notice the moment's almost frantic resistance.

He said, "If it wasn't that I knew they would—a lot of prairie wolves—get at you, do everything to make trouble, I would take you down—I have thought about it—and just say, 'Here is the future Mrs. Holder; and the future is not far off.' "

"Oh no-no-no-no!" she begged. "Not—"

"No. It is better that they don't see you."

"No—I mean—not——"

Still misunderstanding, he said:

"No, they shall not know you are a dancer. I made 'em think you were——"

He stopped, as if aware that nothing so much makes a fool of a man as his tongue. Javotte might not like to have been thought a waitress.

"Not so soon—eet can't be we are marry! Oh, no, no!"

"Why not?"

Consciously or not, he gave gravity to everything he said by the pause before speaking, the slowness of the words, the directness of the heavily lidded eyes.

"Oh, no, no!"

She was taking refuge in the immemorial coquetry of the evasive woman.

"We mus' first be in love a lo-ong, lo-ong time. Oh, yes. Not so soon. Oh, no. That is—" she was visibly groping for something— "how you say eet? Town stuff? Oh ver' town-stuff to be marry soon."

He looked at her, just looked as he so much looked at other people; and she had to wonder what he thought without daring for a moment to drop her pretty play, her rôle of whimsy, gay love.

There was a telephone in the bedroom; and after dressing Holder ordered a breakfast in keeping with his size.

They ate together like conspirators. Every word of hers was a whisper, for somebody might catch a syllable and grow suspicious; and he could not talk lest a passing servant listen.

"Servants—they make me nervous," he said, giving an amazing confession; but she did not believe him, for it seemed nothing could make him nervous.

Yet it was truth. He had spoken quite honestly. She took it for a jest; he had a way of saying curious things.

Holder may have suspected that most of the people who have them are uneasy in the presence of servants. It was visible enough that his sisters were. But DeBroom—that broken rake as if by magic with careless gesture or intonation dominated ever menial that he came in contact with, from head waiters to elevator boys. The real patents of aristocracy are conferred from the back stairs; bankers may not know the difference, but a footman can't be fooled by manners acquired along with the dollars.

The subject was on Holder's mind, as it intrudes itself on all newly rich; and Javotte, who was in no wise stupid, did not quite know what he meant in saying:

"You can buy everything but the respect of servants. My sister Jess—you'll meet her—she bought into the DeBrooms. But she is afraid of her maid; and that maid almost worships DeBroom, and he's a skeleton. We'll do our own housework, unh?"

Though Javotte was almost entirely at ease by that time, it was a relief when Murdock came. He was a man she did understand completely. He was an ordinary New Yorker, with the processes and reactions of what appeared to her to be the normal man, except that he was a little more honest than the average. The chances were that he would never get on in the world; but after all it appears that only unscrupulous men are ambitious—and not that ambition tends to destroy all the virtues that Heaven rewards.

She told him also of her experience with the robber, but in neither case mentioning her fear that he recognized her.

Murdock assured her in a plain matter-of-fact way—he was just that sort of fellow; more honest than intelligent—that it would be easy to get her away when night came; that he would drive her himself; that she must need be patient until evening when she could slip out of the house, get into the car where he was waiting, and away they would go.

Holder said:

"I had better go down. See what's going on. Be just like those policemen to suspect me—think I'm hiding. Unh? Un.

"You stay here, Murdock. She gets excited if she's left alone. Keep her away from the windows. Look at scenery some other time."

Holder had hardly got down the stairs before there came the message calling Murdock; and he went, warning Javotte to keep

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away from windows and not to answer any knocks, but to lock the door and leave the key in it. Murdock's idea was that some servant might come in to straighten up.

JAVOTTE, alone, drew herself up on the lounge chair, wrapped her cloak about her, and brooded. She had glanced at the day-old newspaper, but no New Yorker reads yesterday's news. She looked at the two books on the table, but was neither interested in immigration statistics nor in the sardonic Bercovici; so she enveloped herself in the brocaded velvet and stared vacantly at the hall door while her thoughts were busy with her problems.

Suddenly Javotte's eyes focused on the key. She sat up, tensely staring, listening.

She was sure that key had moved; but wondered if nerves were playing tricks.

There had not been a sound approaching the door.

The key moved again the least little bit.

Javotte brushed her eyes; it must have been a frightened imagination, for the key was now motionless.

Then it moved again.

This was unnatural, incredible, impossible, and she stiffened in fright, for it *was* turning. The faintest of faint metallic clicks came to her. Some one *was* opening that door and coming in; she would be found!

She stood up, desperate and helpless. Any move she made to oppose the entrance would betray her presence. If she cried out she would be calling the house down upon her, and the house was full of policemen.

In moments of stress people rarely think; impressions cross the consciousness with a rapidity too great to be attracted to any sort of simile. The mind is crowded so swiftly that a second seems to become an appreciable length of time, as when in sleep a dream that fills half the night takes place in the hazy half-minute of awakening; and as Javotte stared she knew how from every angle she was caught.

The only thing she might have done came to her too late, for it came as a conscious thought just as the door latch clicked with the turn of the knob. If she had run forward and held the key so it could not have turned, then the burden of the struggle would have been on the mysterious intruder.

She was caught, and she was helpless.

In the fascination of great dread she stood straight and rigid, waiting.

The door opened swiftly, and there again was the masked figure.

He moved like a shadow, noiseless, but somehow without suggesting stealth; and as he came in he was slipping into a vest pocket a pair of those delicate, long-pointed little pliers with which men of the night are able to use the key which has been left in the lock.

"Ah, Javotte," he said pleasantly. "I thought perhaps you were sleeping."

He closed the door quietly and without turning around—just putting his hand behind him—turned the key.

"How you know I am here?" she demanded.

The security of her hiding-place was uppermost in her mind.

"Tell me, where else might you have been?"

"Who—*who* are you, p'ease?"

"First listen."

Again that voice without being rough and threatening took on subtly the tone of menace.

"I did not intend to trouble you—" he was pleasantly ironical—"to trouble you in this pleasant rookery; but I had to run or hide, and—" he smiled—"I thought you would be glad to help me."

"Uo-o-o-o," said Javotte, clenching her fingers.

This man, he played on her with such detestable certainty; there was no getting behind that delicate mockery; and as he pleased he frightened or angered, but not once let her feel anything but helpless.

"They are looking for me. They may search the house, but Murdock will say he has examined these rooms, so—" he glanced about—"you are to tell me where is the best place I can wait until night. I understand there are three rooms. One you use I shall stay there."

He paused, and she shook her head, unconsciously protesting.

"Yes," he said.

Then she trembled; for after the moment's silence he spoke again, and she knew that he had caught her thought:

"Do you wish to try that? To let Murdock and Holder catch me? You have so many friends that you wish me to be an enemy?"

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He was not threatening her, and he was not begging. She was not sure but that he was making fun of her.

"Oh, I would nev-*are* do that thing!"

"It pleases me to hear it."

She knew that was ironical.

"But if you get foun' here—here with me—oh!"

He walked from door to door, pushing them open, looking inside; then:

"The bedroom, of course. You are tired and will sleep."

He pushed the door back as far as it would go.

"Yes—there is room. Behind the door. If either of those men *do* come in he will leave the door open. You must say—

" 'Leave it open—more air.'

"I can stay there."

"But so many hours, you will be tire'!"

"How thoughtful, Javotte. But it is you who must say you are tired. Play up, play up, Javotte. Don't try to make *me* think you are just out of a nunnery. I know—" the pause was maddening to her, for she stood braced as if for a blow, waiting the sentence's end—"ah—better."

She was painfully tormented by the wonder of whether or not this fellow did know her. He seemed so indifferent, so sure of himself and of her, that she was exasperated. He acted just as if she would do whatever he said, and Javotte was resentful; the more so because she felt both afraid and helpless to oppose him.

When nothing else is left to a woman she chooses between a theatrical attitude and melting tears. Javotte was not given to tears. She stood erect and stiff, her cloak caught about her like a stage queen about to read the riot act, and glared at him.

He was at his ease and did not appear to notice; but he must have, for otherwise he could not have so completely ignored her at the time. He looked about the room curiously; touched the books on the table, reading their titles, then said, "M-hm," thoughtfully. After a moment's meditation he glanced sidelong at Javotte, with—

"But I don't see how he has come to be such a fool over you."

Javotte flashed—

"You know me?"

"Yes, I know you—and a thousand more just like you."

"But I mean——"

Javotte was breathless.

He cut in:

"I know what you mean. And listen."

Again the subtle imperative tinged with menace:

"It makes no difference who I am or what I know, I am not going to hurt you if you play the game half-way right. But don't try to marry him."

"Why—why you say who eet is I marry?"

He smiled slightly in a curious way.

"Perhaps I don't like to see a man cheated even when he's paying for folly."

"Oh?"

She had not the least idea of what he meant; but the full meaning of the next remark struck her like a club, for he said—

"Or perhaps I don't want to see you shaken up in the chair—the electric one, you know."

"Oh!"

It was a low gasp of mingled anger and horror.

Then quite pleadingly she asked—

"You think that—of—of me?"

He answered quietly, almost indifferently, flipping over the cover of a book and looking at it as he spoke:

"What else? You know you can not be his wife, really. But his widow—that could be more easily arranged."

He looked up, directly at her horrified face.

"Like a good many other people I know that precious uncle of yours, Javotte. On account of him I have to keep a pair of eyes in the back of my head——"

"Oh I hate heem! I hate heem—always I hate heem!"

She swung forward. She was frightened, she was begging. This man *did* know her. The cloak fell away, discarded by hands that went out in gesture, almost imploringly.

"You hate him?"

His voice was low and cold.

"Then why don't you kill him?"

"Oh! Me—murder—Oh!"

The man idly adjusted his mask. He did not believe her; not a word, not a gesture. But he looked at her keenly when he answered:

"It will be that for Holder—and you *love* him. But I understand."

He shrugged a shoulder.

"A woman's love is deadly. Your cousin, she kills a lover every few months I believe—or tries to. And you're as much alike as

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such an artist as the devil could make you."

Javotte was maddened. She made a low, inarticulate sound of rage, and her little fragile hands took on the shape of claws set to scratch. Every impulse in her flared up at his insults and insultingly polite matter-of-fact way. He assumed that she would not dare resist or challenge; and she was unreasoningly aroused.

"You think eet is I am afraid of you?" she almost cried. "No. I call. I bring people. I say: 'I am here. Do what you p'ease an' think the same.' But you—I will not be one help to you. No. *Nevare!* I go right now an' call—stand away so I pass!"

He bowed slightly—not elaborately, not mockingly—and stepped aside, gesturing submissively toward the door.

But she knew that he was mocking her. Her anger had been honest. For the moment she meant to do just as she said, for anger and lunacy have the same sort of blindness.

She walked to the door, expecting him to catch her back or at least speak. She turned the key. She turned the knob. A pause and swift glance over her shoulder. He was not even looking in her direction; he was staring down at the book he had opened some time before.

Javotte felt weak from neck to toes. She trembled, bewildered, frightened. She had no way of knowing that he barely eluded her glance when she had turned, or that he had watched closely with the lines of his mouth drawn tensely. It seemed that he was really as indifferent as he appeared.

She locked the door and turned back.

He did not appear to notice.

She approached him and almost humbly asked:

"How did you know I wouldn't do eet? I did not know myself I would not do eet. How did you?"

He said friendlily explaining, or pretending to:

"You knew that I would certainly swear up and down that you had been my little accomplice, and with your—or at least your cousin's—record against you, you would be nabbed and held."

Javotte was startled anew; she had not thought of that.

"Also," he went on, "you knew—didn't you—that I would have got revenge by telling Holder why he couldn't marry you, however much he might want to in spite of everything— It has indeed been a hard day for you."

Javotte was reeling. She caught herself. Her feet moved stumblingly, and in a drunken daze she groped for the lounge chair, falling into it, huddling down into it, crushed completely.

HOLDER and Murdock came up together.

As she was opening the door to them both exclaimed at her appearance.

"What is the matter?" Holder asked almost rapidly.

Murdock, more quick at deduction as a detective should be, said:

"You've been frightened. Somebody tried to get in?"

"Yes," she admitted, breathing in sighs.

"That's it!" Murdock exclaimed, throwing the puzzle into shape with the dexterity of a *Lecoq*. "The fellow wanted to get into your room, Mr. Holder. Must have thought there was something worth getting at. He got me away—and in trying to get in frightened the girl half to death. But how did you keep him out? A key in a lock is nothing for an expert."

"Oh—I—I held the key. He try to turn eet. I jus' hold— Oh, an' I am so afraid!"

Holder picked her up, lifting her easily as one lifts a pillow.

"You must rest. On the bed. Maybe you can sleep. Nothing to be afraid of now. Un-n—no."

"Oh p'ease, I am a'right now. I will lie down—let me be down, p'ease. An' tell me what is all the matter? What has happen'? Who—" she dreaded the question for there were ears in the bedroom—who is he?"

Together they told her, Murdock telling the most: How it had been found out that Merwin Middleton was an impostor who had cleverly, daringly, imposed on old Louden; and how, when thinking they had Middleton cornered, he had escaped.

Then Holder, who at ease among friends seemed quite another person, said with slow heaviness:

"Crime wave—no mystery at all. Had to come. Has to stay a long time. Just money. Just get the money, that's all.

"Get the coin—that's been everybody's—unh—motto for fifty years. Unh? You know it. Look at politics. Every city,

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town, spot and speck on the map, full of grafters. People expect city officials to graft. Men spend ten thousand to get 'emselves elected to five-thousand-dollar jobs.

"Once in a while there's a hullabaloo. Reformers catch somebody so they can get his place and graft. That's what everybody thinks anyway. Every official is a grafter—an' nobody cares. You know what I mean. Public attitude. Unh?

"What Americans say? Anybody clever enough to get away with it is entitled to the coin. Look at colleges—all teach how to get money without work. Make money, unh? Get the coin—that's what *E Pluribus Unum* means. It's on all the dollars. Everybody chasing—unh—dollars.

"Then the war, unh? Spent millions—of men. Cheapest thing in America—fine boys. Wasted them. Kept dollars more at home. More boys that were killed off, more money left in appropriations for the grafters. Unh?

"Why shouldn't everybody graft that got a chance? Honest officials been treated as a joke—a myth—no such animal—fifty years.

"Shipyards. Unh? Rotten. Newspapers yelped a while and quieted down. Only people that remember the graft stories are widows and mothers with crippled sons. Unh?

"Crime wave? All part of Get-the-Coin motto. Aeroplanes—half a billion spent. But our boys had to fly in machines British and French discarded. Unh? All the stay-at-home grafters got the coin.

"Profiteers—get the coin. Crime wave—just a get-the-coin movement. It has worked down into the criminal class. Nothing has any value but money in America. Unh?

"The big growing idea is, Why should anybody work for money when he can steal it? Why? Unh? This is no crime wave—it is a harvest."

The words fell slowly, thoughtfully, awkwardly in a heavy dull voice, as the words do of those who are not used to thinking aloud. And when he had finished he looked more embarrassed than anything else, if any sort of tangible expression could be distinguished on his immobile features.

Murdock was drumming with absent-minded detachment on the arm of his chair, thinking thoughts of his own, far off from Holder's theme; and Javotte looked interested, but rather vague; she could glean only an impression of what it was about.

In the next room, however, Holder had an intelligent and attentive listener, one that reflected broodingly on what he had heard, and particularly upon the speaker.

V

BY EVENING all of the guests were gone. Some had remained while the house and grounds were being searched so as not to miss any of the excitement; but there had been no excitement.

Nothing could be found that gave the least clue to where the robber had gone. If he had gone up in a puff of smoke he could not have vanished more completely.

It was puzzling, almost mysterious; and this second disappearance, added to the similar one of Javotte Murilla, convinced the police detectives that these crooks had accomplices among the servants.

The detectives, after pretending to leave for the city, were to spend the night watching near the garage, for they were pretty sure that the crooks would try to make off in one of the cars.

It was now evident that they had misjudged Holder's attitude toward them. He was not unfriendly. Though he was going into the city that evening he was leaving his chauffeur at the service of the police detectives.

Murdock would drive the limousine in for him.

The house was empty except for the family and servants; but the servants were ubiquitous and ferret-eyed. They were suspicious of each other; and they were doubly watchful and inclined to prowl because it was thought the crooks were still in the house.

Said Holder to Murdock, in talking over the arrangements:

"Everything must be fixed just so. Whatever a fellow leaves to chance always favors misfortune. Unh?"

Later this impassive bulk of a man who appeared about as sedentary as a sack of wheat said—

"You don't spend enough time on your toes, Murdock, trying to see over the heads of people."

Behind the bedroom door the masked man listened and heard that it would be a dark night; the moon wasn't coming up

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until late; Holder would have the car brought around before dark, then decide to wait until after dinner; and the car would stand unlighted after night came; the driveway lights would not be turned on, or if so they would be turned off, and nobody would notice, for the servants were going to be very much excited. Right after dinner all of them were to be mustered in the hall, every last one from gardener's boy to Mrs. Louden's maid; and while Holder was offering a hundred dollars to any one discovering evidence leading to the robbers, Murdock was to escort Javotte down the deserted back-stairs, around the house and into the car.

At the first opportunity Holder would slip out to evade attention or the switching-on of the driveway lights, get into the car and off they would go—without anybody having seen Javotte.

As night came on Javotte lay sleeplessly on the bed where she was supposed to be resting, and eyed the patient masked man who, without restlessness or complaining, leaned in the corner behind the door.

She had asked—

"Don't you get tired?"

He answered enigmatically—

"Yes, often, but I don't care to rest in jail."

She quite reasonably guessed that he kept the mask on because he knew she would recognize him; and she pounded her little head with wonder as to who he was. At times she thought she knew, and the thought made her tremble.

The stage was set. The servants had been gathered. Murdock was soon to come for Javotte.

"Now," said the man to her, "this is what you must do——"

Javotte was standing before a mirror, taking the parting glance at herself that a woman can not resist when she is about ready to leave the room, and she became motionless, watching in the glass, dreading what he would say.

"When Murdock comes, tell him to go on ahead and turn out the lights and you will follow. Insist on that. He may explain it isn't necessary—but it is. You make him know he must keep ahead of you. Then when he goes out, hand me that hooded cloak. I'll wear it, and you wait here."

"A-no! No! *No!*"

She whirled around and drew back, saying—

"No!"

She pulled the cloak more tightly about her. She would not give it up. No. It was the symbol of her escape. Her attitude was defiant.

There is a point where fear ceases to be fear and becomes desperation, which is a sort of rebound and has a menace of its own.

Javotte said, "No—*nev-are!*" and meant it. She was braced to resist threats or violence. The very worst that could be done did not seem terrifying to her at that moment.

There were no threats. The fellow smiled slightly, with faint amusement, and saying with perfect suavity, "As you please, Javotte," bowed; and when he lifted his head the mask was off.

Javotte's hands went out gropingly to catch whatever was near so that she might not fall. Astonishment could not have been more complete on her face. She said, "Oh" weakly, meaninglessly, and hesitatingly shrank away.

He seemed at the same time a little amused and pitying, not unkindly. His was a dread name of the underworld, and all Javotte's fiery temper and resistance collapsed.

He was neither triumphant nor ironical as he asked—

"You will do as I say, Javotte?"

But he did seem almost kindly amused, just a little pleased and oddly gentle. He did not want even to appear to have humiliated her.

Javotte nodded and said:

"Yes. I do what you say."

SHE was both afraid of him and grateful; afraid of the name for cruelty that he had, and grateful because she did not have far back in her memory to go to reach a midnight when the fierce Cabron strode up and down in the curtained room and cursed her with every lurid oath known to him. She had the Latin girl's fear of curses; and chilled with fear and dread she sat helpless in a chair before him.

The tigerish Leela, half sneering and partly bored, leaned idly against the mantel, smoking daintily, carelessly rattling the jeweled bracelets on her forearm and listening. In spite of herself, Javotte could never do less than half-love Leela. They

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had had moments of endearing intimacies; and if Leela would break out into tantrums like a pretty lunatic, also she could be sweet and lovely.

But Leela had grown more and more haughty, cynical, jeering, until long before this painful night Javotte had felt far apart from the eccentric cousin whom she could not hate no matter how much she grew to dread her. Leela, decked in the bizarre richness that she loved, listened and watched in silent derision.

Javotte had refused, and continued to refuse, to be tossed into marriage with a rich young degenerate—newly rich, of a family war rich—who had thrown himself headlong into the fiery, throbbing, rabid gaiety of the city's low world. She had developed unsuspected ideals and resistance. Stubbornly she had said she would go to no man except that she loved him; she would marry none that did not respect her.

"You won't! You won't!"

Cabron had cried, raising his hands as if to strike her down.

Pale of face, too choked to speak, Javotte shook her head.

God alone knows from where ideals come or how they reach the breasts scattered among the crowds of the earth; or why so often in those breasts they are smothered, strangled, furtively buried amid the dead things of the heart; or why again they grow up defiant and unbendable, and the body gives up its life before the heart will yield its virtue. Perhaps Javotte's dead mother had with the imperceptible whisperings of germinal blood taught the secret to her. Anyway Javotte refused to make herself a trap to catch the rich young idiot Cabron wanted to strip as a butcher skins a dead calf.

Cabron, formerly Cabrona, was a sleek, wiry, autocratic dark man, who loved revenge next to money. As everybody must who makes a success of business in the Tenderloin, he paid graft and stood in with the powers higher up. He had a lot of gangsters attached to him, with some small private rooms off of a small hall up-stairs over his restaurant where they could meet and eat in privacy if they wished. Such a small trivial thing as having somebody killed never troubled Cabron.

"You won't? Then eet is a death for you!" he screamed.

"Tut-tut," a soft reproving ironical voice had said, and a masked man in evening dress with the quiet manner of half-weariness stood in the doorway, an automatic carelessly resting across his waist. His hands were not gloved.

He came into the room slowly, with a slight but pronounced limp, and Cabron, drawing back as if from a hole that had opened before his feet, said—

"B'ack Wolf!"

He knew, all the underworld and overworld too, knew of this Black Wolf by description; and knew too that he had lately acquired a slight limp by jumping from a second-story window, his pockets full of gems, when there was a whirlwind rush of cops at the front door.

"Ah, yes, Cabron. I believe that is one of my names. One of them. I have had it in mind for some time to call on you."

Leela stood away from the mantel, bold-eyed, erect, unafraid, watching him with enigmatic scrutiny.

Black Wolf gestured slightly, scarcely moving his hand more than at the wrist but signaling for Cabron to raise his arms. Cabron glared murderously but did as told.

"Miss Cabron"—he spoke to Leela—"you will please be seated—ah—there by—Miss Cabronette, isn't it?"

He was distinguishedly gracious, a little amused, but with unmistakable menace behind his words.

Leela, spangles and bracelets and anklets faintly sounding, went to the chair and sat down. She did it interestedly, without petulance.

Black Wolf went through Cabron's pockets with the deft swiftness that a magician uses in juggling; then pointed him toward a closet; and when Cabron was at the closet doorway, Black Wolf spoke to him, saying:

"You are not troubled with your ears in any way? They are all right? You hear perfectly? Then there will be no excuse for your not paying attention to what I tell you. Will there? *Answer me!*"

The flash of directness in the command gave Cabron a jar as if struck. He mumbled vaguely.

"Then—" the voice was again suavely sardonic, and somehow almost weary, tired— "then think how unlucky, how very, very unlucky it would be for you, Cabron, if anything should ever happen to kill the little Cabronette here. If she *did*

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get sick for instance; or if an auto should *really* run her down; or if she *did* slip on some dark stair and break her fragile little neck, or if anything at all like that should happen to her—do you understand Cabron—it would be unlucky for you.

"For one thing, one of any number of things, Cabron, a lad by the name of Silkeen Harry might take another shot at you."

At the taunting reference to that deadly gangster Cabron gave a start. He had reason to fear the feud with such a crazy gunman as Silkeen Harry, who made a practise of using dumdums on people he did not like; and who, some months before, in company with another desperate convict, had led a break in a penitentiary not a thousand miles from New York. The two ringleaders had shot their way out and gone clear. Silkeen Harry was known to be back in New York; but just where, nobody who wanted him knew.

"All right; in you go, Cabron."

Black Wolf shut the closet door and locked it.

He turned toward the girls, looked at them, looked the longer at Javotte, then slowly, limping slightly, walked to the mantel and for a moment admiringly, appraisingly inspected a fiery goblet of ancient glassware which Leela had been attracted into buying by its brilliant coloring. He picked it up, his hand around the bowl, and held it from him; then gently set it back, and said impersonally:

"Pretty, very pretty. But not genuine;" and, looking toward the girls, added with soft irony:

"Like most of the pretty things in the world. Is it not so, Cabronette?"

Javotte sighed wearily.

With tantalizing, half-weary gentleness, that somehow seemed the coating of sardonic menace, impalpably ironical, he asked them to please stay seated and keep quiet, and not to so much as look around while he gave some attention to the wall safe on the other side of the room behind them.

Once Leela did look around and she met his eyes, watching her, waiting for her to do just that; and, flushing as if caught in something guilty, she looked away again.

This Black Wolf was known to be a wizard at going into safes; and he sensitively caught the combination of Cabron's almost as rapidly as if he knew it; and with the composure of one who had time without end he went through papers and scanned receipts and documents, making up a considerable package which he put aside to carry away with him.

Then he went back to the girls and looked them over, not so much insultingly as like a costumer eyeing their appearance and possibilities. Javotte was wearing no jewelry of value.

He said to Leela:

"I am sorry, Miss Cabron, but I always feel ashamed of myself when I leave anything of value behind. You will please take off the rings, bracelets, earrings—and—ah—the ankle bracelets, too. Their absence will not diminish your charm in the least."

For a wonder, Leela quietly did as told. She handed the things to him, one by one; then as he took the last trinket from her extended fingers, her hand flashed out and snatched away the mask.

She gazed as if stunned. She did not know him, but she could never forget him and had no wish to. His features were clear, strong, a little tired but bold.

He was neither disconcerted nor angered that his identity had been revealed. He replaced the mask skilfully as if nothing had happened, except that he said, smiling without humor and yet without unpleasantness—

"I hope neither of us may be sorry."

And he had gone away, taking with him Leela's very heart.

Leela was determined to find him, find out all about him, have him, love him; for love as used by the poets, romancers and criminologists, means that sort of unreason that throws aside family, honor, caste, money, pride, health, and life; that simply discards all the values of earth and heaven too, for an ecstasy none the less mystical because it is fleshly.

Judges, preachers, scholars, law-makers and the police frown upon such passion, punish it in this life and point to hell for its future; and perhaps wisely, for it is usually violent and always unhappy if not tragic. It is probably a form of insanity, but one idealized by ancient chroniclers. It strikes as the lightning strikes, or may come from the slow magnetism of propinquity. Nobody knows anything about why it comes, or how long it will last; though every woman believes herself capable of the great and eternal passion, and many fool themselves into believing they have it,

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and more merely pretend to have it when all they are after is money or marriage.

Now it would be impossible to say whether through fear of Black Wolf and Silkeen Harry, or whether seeking a more humiliating revenge than death, Cabron did no physical injury to Javotte. Perhaps Leela urged him to do as he did. Anyway Javotte was forcibly married to a gangster; not even a gangster, but lower yet; about the lowest thing that can be found in the sweepings of a city's alley. A forced marriage, with primed witnesses, is as binding as any other in the courts of the land, because everybody will blandly say "the woman lies; she made no protest at the wedding."

Javotte's husband had been eager enough to play the groom; but before the marriage night was half over he was into hot water up to his neck. In some desperate way Javotte had escaped and disappeared; and Cabron, furious, blamed the fellow for having let her get away, swore that he did so willingly. And the fellow went into hiding on his own hook, and stayed there; for he feared Cabron would either frame him or kill him.

Thus so it was that when Javotte had again come face to face with the Black Wolf she had already suspected but by no means been sure that this man, so far from the underworld, was the same as the gracious, ironical limping figure to whom she was fearfully grateful. And she was as afraid of him as grateful, because it was known that he would be cruel when resisted.

THEY stood in silence until the coming of footsteps made him alert.

"Quick, Javotte," he whispered, holding his mask toward her. "Be pretending to put this on as you talk to him, then——"

He held up a finger and stopped.

Footsteps entered the next room. A light knock came on the door, with:

"It's me. Murdock."

Javotte, enveloped in her long velvet cloak, the hood up, and with the mask in her hand as if to slip it on, opened the door slightly; then, seeing Murdock, drew it back.

"Mr. Holder has worked it clever. There isn't a soul about. It's safe as can be."

"But I wish you would go ahead and switch out the lights. I would feel more—"

"Nobody at all to see you."

"Please; I prefer eet!"

Her lips said please, but the manner was a little imperative.

"Don't you understand? Might make somebody suspicious later—see all the lights out. It's safe. Really."

Murdock at all times had that sort of sensitive respect for Javotte that one has toward a woman of whose temper he is a little afraid. Murdock was just a plain honest fellow; and no coward, at least not with men. But Javotte said—

"I shall not move until you do as I ask."

He made some sort of vague sound, and turned sullenly. But he looked around and said:

"All right. Come on then."

"I follow as the lights are put out," Javotte answered with as much spirit as if she really wished it.

Murdock went out.

"Good, good, Javotte," Black Wolf said with scarcely any sound, and a little amused as if praising a child that has done well. "The cloak—ah—not much of a fit for me. But he won't believe his eyes even if he notices anything wrong. The mask. I have to hide feet and hands—it takes complete darkness to do that. Now Javotte, follow *me*, but keep out of sight. We'll come out of this together."

He spoke as if pleased at a game, and she could not help feeling he was ever so faintly mocking her.

It was an odd and furtive procession, slipping through the hall and down the stairs. Murdock continually glanced backward into the darkness where he could see a shrouded shadow that paused from time to time until he had located the switch and extinguished a light.

This, Murdock knew, was rather overdoing caution; but he was not wholly unfamiliar with the imperative whims of women.

He led the way down the back stairs, and in places it was very dark. He paused, asking, "Can you see?" but got no answer; and he wondered why she was being sullen.

Outside of the house, by the pantry door, he waited. It was so dark one could not see.

As the supposed Javotte came to the doorway Murdock reached out saying—

"I'd better take your arm here."

There was no answer, but he got a sharp protesting nudge from an elbow.

"I know the way. I'd better help you," he insisted and laid a hand on that elbow.

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He kept a guiding hand there, and escorted "her" along the flagstone walk and to the graveled driveway.

Murdock was preoccupied, and did not notice the masculinity of the elbow nor the heaviness of the tiptoed effort at lightness in walking. Even in the blackness he could not have been fooled had he for an instant had suspicions; but it was impossible to suspect that this hooded and masked figure was not the same as had spoken with Javotte's voice a few minutes before.

There were no lights glaring down onto the driveway, though the diffused glow through the windows enabled Murdock and his companion to see faintly; and they approached the darkened limousine.

"We are all right now," said Murdock, and opened the door.

In silence the supposed Javotte disappeared into the solid blackness of the car. Murdock took a few steps toward the door of the house.

Had he faced the car and watched closely with the night-seeing eyes of a cat, he might have seen a man's figure emerge through the opposite door of the limousine.

But he saw nothing.

He heard a gentle tapping against the glass, an unmistakable signal to attract his attention, to draw him close enough for a whisper.

He came unsuspectingly toward the car.

A crouching footfall, an extended arm, the fiercely spoken words, "Hands up!" all came at the same time, and Murdock could vaguely make out the form of a man just around the rear of the car and within three or four feet of himself.

Murdock was a sensible fellow; and sensible fellows, unless the occasion is desperate, do not make trouble when the drop is on them.

He raised his hands.

The man, speaking into the car as if some one were there, said:

"You keep quiet, too. No one will hurt you."

"Then to Murdock:

"Come here. Turn around."

Quickly Murdock was searched and disarmed.

The man said:

"Tell her to be quiet and stay where she is. No, you don't need to get into the car to do it. Just tell her to stay quiet."

Murdock spoke to the darkness and said simply:

"I think you'd better do as this man says. Maybe——"

"That's right, Murdock. You have said all that is necessary. Now right ahead with you."

The man laid an arm on Murdock's shoulder, and, half-pushing and partly guiding him, went fifty paces away, back in the direction they had come, and stopped behind some bushes.

He took Murdock's coat and hat, then tied his hands and feet and put a handkerchief into his mouth, saying:

"If you keep quiet until the car leaves nobody will be hurt. Make all the racket you want then. All I want to do is get away—I'm taking your place at the wheel. What do you say?"

Murdock said nothing, and the man answered:

"Good. You agree then. See that you keep quiet."

He left Murdock on the ground behind the row of bushes, and, going along the driveway, came upon Javotte. She was shrinking fearfully to one side. The white of her face, shoulders and arms could be seen. The rest of her was shrouded in invisibility as the blackness of her costume was merged into the darkness.

She twisted from him as he put a hand on her, and she struck the hand away.

"Shh-hh-h," he warned with the lightest of sibilants; then spoke faintly: "I'll carry you to the car. He'll hear only my footsteps. As soon as Holder gets into the car tell him. He won't be able to help himself—and I'm as good a driver as Murdock."

He picked her up. Her muscles were rigid, contracted in protest against his touch but she did not resist.

She could not understand his attitude. He seemed indifferent to her good graces and yet was taking much trouble to keep her from being suspected. She did not realize that he had worn her cloak because there was hardly another way of getting close to Murdock without having him warned and made alert by the crunch of footsteps on the gravel.

"As soon as the car starts, tell him," the man said as he placed her inside. "Your cloak—it is on the seat some place."

Javotte shivered in the depths of the car as she waited.

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The man in Murdock's hat and coat sat behind the wheel, waiting.

It was many minutes before the house door opened and the bulky silhouette of Holder hurriedly came out of the house carrying a folded newspaper.

"All right, Murdock?" he asked, a hand on the door of the car.

The answer was given with a muffled voice, lost in the whir of the starter. Holder wedged himself into the car and Javotte gave a cry of relief. The headlights flashed on and the car was off.

Holder chuckled, satisfied.

She was shaking. Her teeth clicked. Her fingers were bloodless as if frozen. The car was rushing at mad speed.

"Unh. What's the matter with that fellow?" Holder said heavily. "Murdock's lost his head."

"Eet is not Murdock—eet is——"

"Un—what?"

"Eet is—eet is—oh, how can I say?—eet is B'ack Wolf!"

For a moment Holder said nothing, did nothing. Then he switched on the dome light.

Javotte was frightened. Trembling, she told him what she knew; but made no mention of how well the fellow knew her. She had never told Holder of her forced marriage and never intended to.

Black Wolf was not a name that he had given himself. It was a popular contraction of "black-hearted wolf," applied to him with feeling by certain of the aforesaid people of importance. It had been quickly adopted in the underworld where, as among savages the world over, names are fashioned from some incident or fastened to fit the individuality.

Holder knew the name.

"Black Wolf?"

He asked it without alarm or astonishment. He seemed only making sure that he had heard rightly, and not that it made much difference. He looked at her with veiled scrutiny, and she was uneasy.

The car was going at terrific speed. Shouts, faint as wind-blown voices, reached them as their machine passed other autos, in which frightened people damned the speeders. The limousine swayed and rocked on its flexible springs.

Javotte resisted the impulsive urge to tell the whole story. She did not dare.

Unexcitedly, each word spaced, he said, "How on earth——" and looked ahead toward the driver's seat.

Javotte told him, guiltily keeping this side of the truth.

The car swerved, swung from the main road. It seemed they were toppling over. Then with jolting bounce and bump it plunged on.

Holder grunted. Javotte, terrified, stared at him; but there was not a trace of anxiety on his face.

"Oh—oh, stop heem!"

Then, having thought it out, Holder said:

"Unh-un. He thinks Murdock may chase him. Or telephone. Un. Murdock may lose his head and do just that. I don't think we'd better stop him. We want to get away as much as he does. You—un—you don't think he hurt Murdock?"

Javotte buried herself helplessly against him, and shut her eyes tightly.

For a long time they rode in silence, except for an occasional meditative "hn-nn" as he looked down at the top of Javotte's head. She was huddled against him. Something seemed broken inside of her. Once he lifted his great heavy hand awkwardly to stroke her head, but put it down again as if uncertain of whether she would wish such rude weight on her.

Once or twice he peered through the window, studying the black roadside, now and then studded with lights; but he had no idea where they were. He did not seem to care, but with the stolid air of a broad-faced image sat almost motionless.

After running many miles at high speed, with various turns and twists, the car slowed down to something near a legal rate; and twenty-five miles an hour seemed as if they were barely crawling along.

SUDDENLY at a turn in the road, overhung with trees and black as a cave at midnight, the car stopped.

Black Wolf got down. He opened the limousine door. He had again slipped on the mask, and bowed with exaggerated politeness. At the sound of his voice Javotte sat up, startled. She glared at him suspiciously.

"I am sorry to trouble you, but——"

He paused and made a very humble bow. "—we should come to some sort of an understanding, don't you think?"

Holder grunted non-committally.

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"I was sure you would agree with me. An understanding—that is the thing."

His voice was smooth, his manner almost humble, but his words would have chilled the heart of a frozen pirate.

"This is a nice quiet spot, suitable for murder——"

He paused. Javotte, eyes widened, mouth parted, stared. He seemed jesting, but with something that was not jest faintly ringing in his words.

Holder, broad as an oaken door, had turned his head slightly and was looking dully into the masked face.

"Suitable for murder—" the voice repeated mockingly.

It was dark. The road was lonely. The glare of the headlights threw up a dismal row of aged tree-trunks, and from overhead long branches drooped dispiritedly as if sheltering what deeds went on beneath them from the eyes of Heaven.

"Unh?" Holder grunted, questioning.

Through the slits of black silk eyes searched his face, and were determinedly curious to see what was behind that dull impassive countenance.

"Listen," said Black Wolf, his voice taking on that shade of menace Javotte shivered at hearing. "I have to live by what I can take away from people like you. Now I've got you cornered out here on this road."

He snapped out the question—

"What have *you* got to say?"

And as he finished it, he threw up an automatic so that it covered Holder's head.

Holder stared at him, then at the gun, then back again at the man. Nothing moved but his eyes. Not a muscle of his face.

"Talk fast," said Black Wolf.

Holder made some sort of slight vague sound.

"What's that? You said something?"

Heavily, wearily, Holder answered—

"I said, '*Nothing.*' "

Black Wolf seemed to glare through the mask; then, deliberately raising the gun as if to shoot, he asked threateningly—

"You mean that?"

Javotte cried out and would have thrown herself before him, but with a slow gesture of a massive arm Holder pushed and held her back.

Real terror was on her face. Strained and breathless, she waited, her ears already echoing the roar of the shot she feared.

The only change in his expression was that the heavy brows were pulled together slightly, giving more a look of puzzlement than of anger; but he said nothing.

Then the anti-climax. With an amused though forced mocking light laugh, the masked man tossed the gun to the floor of the car, saying:

"A souvenir! It's empty. I have to play a little joke on my friends now and then. What I really wanted to know is, can you drive this car yourself?"

Javotte had hid her face as if shamed at having been tricked into terror.

There was no change in Holder's manner. His brows remained contracted. His eyes were steady and slow, and with the same dull steadiness of gaze he looked into the masked face, and said—

"Yes."

The man answered:

"I shall leave you a few miles farther on and catch an interurban. At 'most any garage you can find somebody to take you on in."

When Black Wolf was again on the seat, with mask off, the meditations as he drove along were something after this manner:

"I don't know yet what sort of man is inside of him. He acts about like a wooden Indian. But Javotte, *she* thought I would shoot. It was right on her face that she did. She really does love that fellow, and if so, why ——"

He gestured vaguely into the night.

With one hand Holder held her two small, slim hands, and they were lost in the grip of his fingers.

She leaned against him and was very white of face and tired. With his free hand he held the newspaper and awkwardly waved it at her face. She looked faint and breathing as one does who is just emerging from a fright.

Heavily, with the slow emphasis of careful decision, he said:

"Tomorrow we are married. I don't care—unh—I don't care what else happens. Tomorrow."

Marriage was never proposed with less of an air of courtliness. But he spoke resolutely. What tenderness he may have felt seemed to be repressed by his consciousness of being awkward.

"No—*no*," she begged.

Then hastily, desperately, she tried to assume a lightness of manner.

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"Not tomorrow—oh, p'ease. I love you, you great beeg man, but tomorrow—oh, p'ease."

He answered with finality—

"Tomorrow."

Javotte, with something like the feeling of suffocation, of being crushed from all directions, wrenched her hands free and gropingly reached toward him. She caught his arm and clung to it. She looked away, biting her lips to hold in frantic words of protest. His hand awkwardly waggled the paper with which he had been fanning her; and nervously, irritatedly, she grasped it, keeping it still.

Javotte leaned over. For a half-minute she was motionless, tense. He could feel her body tremble as suddenly she whirled around, radiant. Impassionedly she threw her arms about his neck, and half-cried from joy:

"Tomorrow—oh, yes, p'ease! Tomorrow—oh, I can not wait!"

In the paper that he held in his hand, under a small one-line head, in an item of a length known to printers as about a "stick," she had read that a body found by the police the day before behind the Roma lodging-house had been definitely identified as that of Peter Burillo, an Italian gangster. There were seven knife-wounds in the body, any one of which would have been fatal.

It was to that sewer rat Cabron had married her.

And Javotte would have been a very much surprized woman to know that Holder, in his awkward, heavy manner, had used up nearly all of his enormous patience trying to attract her attention to this notice of Burillo's death without seeming to do so.

In his queer, simple-natured, honest, gentle way, this big hulk of a fellow felt that if she wished to conceal the shameful experience with such a creature as Burillo, that he would have been a poor sort of a man to make her admit it or talk about it.

As for knowing all about that, and other things—Holder had a detective agency working almost exclusively on his pay-roll, down in the foreign quarters.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE CALL OF THE ADVENTURERS

by Orrin K. Charles

GO! Call them up from the sea, from the reefs uncharted and lonely;
Where the green-crested combers curl, rolling them deep and under.
Where the gray shark noses their bones, and the circling sea-mews only
Plaintively answer the challenging roll of the surge's thunder.

Hail them down from the North where the blinding blizzards sweeping
Out of the Boreal space congealed their blood with its breath.
Fearless and unafraid they fought as they felt it creeping
Sluggishly up through their veins to the heart that labored with death.

Beckon them up from the South, the barren and desolate spaces
That betray the seekers of gold to thirst and ultimate despair.
Under the coppery sky they lie with their blackened faces,
As the vultures wheeling on high drop down through the heat-laden air.

Bring them out of the West, where the lone night rider singing,
Circles the restless herd as the lightning pierces the sky.
Thunder and lashing rain—stampede and the mad hoofs ringing,
As horse and rider go down and the fear-frenzied herd sweeps by.

Hail ye forth to the feast, from the land and the dreams that enthralled ye;
For the Lord High God of Adventure deems ye men of true worth.
Come, O ye intrepid souls, for I, your master, have called ye,
Home from your far-flung trails that girdle the ends of the earth.

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In Kaffir Kraals *

Blood on Upina's Stabbing-Spear

by Santie Sabalala

A Remarkable Account of Actual Savage Life Told by a Zulu Who Lived It

EDITOR'S NOTE—Since white men first penetrated the Black Continent there has been a constant struggle to understand the soul and psychology of the savage—to learn something of his ideals; his secret reactions to emotions, such as suspicion, rage, hunger, ambition, love; his instincts in the jungle; his apprehension of death; his animal lust for butchery in battle; his seeming callousness to pain; his extraordinary superstitions and occult powers. . . . Hitherto the best that has been done was in H. H. Johnston's "History of a Slave," strung second-hand on tales told him by a Mohammedan converted from savagery. But here at last we have the curtain plainly lifted!

Santie Sabalala, a pure-blooded Fingo-Zulu, of the race that brought forth Lobengula and Chaka, the most terrible leaders of savages of whom we have any record, has boldly bared the soul of the savage. Santie Sabalala, who was taught by a friendly white man, gives an account that has no single hint of the influence of civilization or religion. It is pure savagery told by an extremely intelligent man who has come out of the kraals without forgetting anything that was magnificent, strange, horrible, or funny in the life of his own people.

His style of writing is unusually good. The scenes he portrays are extraordinarily vivid—and terrible. And altogether we believe he contributes a remarkable chapter—more absorbing than fiction—to the history of man. While the portrayal of savage life from birth to settled maturity extends through six articles, each of these articles is a complete picture in itself. This is the fifth of the pictures.

AS THE sun neared its meridian the *abafana* shaded their eyes, looked up at the *langa* and trooped to the *kolha* hut. There were hundreds of them, so many that some were forced to stand inside the *sibayi;* others leaned against the huts; while the majority sat around on their haunches in a large irregular semicircle. As the *langa* reached its zenith, the *inkosi* came out of the *kolha* hut and looked the assembly of *abafana* over. They were all there. He then delivered his oration:

"*Se kukudala oko seke salwa, seku si*

* *This is an Off-the-Trail article.* *See foot-note on first contents page.*

"*In Kaffir Kraals.*" *Copyright, 1921, by Santie Sabalala.*

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tiwa amandlha wetu apelile, tina ama Songela! Hi ni na ngaku ba fana niza kuyi mela lonto? Nigama Songela asi ko yiswa azoze so yiswe, i zani siye paya siwa bonise lama gwala, siya kwazi ukulwa; inkomo zambo ze zetu intombi zambo ngambetu, imi bona nama zimba—wonke uni lydambela ye yetu—masi yokulwa abafan—izan!

"It is a long time past since we tried out our arms, so long that our enemies are whispering that we have lost the ways of war, we Songelas! How now, you young warriors, will you stand for that? You are Songelas who have never been conquered and never will be conquered. Let us go down there and show those cowards and big mouths that we can still fight. Their cattle is already ours. Their girls already your wives, their corn our kaffir corn, all their grain ours. Come! Let us go and take it; let us go and fight, young warriors; let us go, let us go!"

The assembled *abafana* listened to the passionate address rather perfunctorily and with lack of interest. One of their number, Upina, got up (he was in his rights as he had just been admitted into the *kolha* group) and demanded:

"Asi katali nga mbanye abantu asi nga ma cguwala, asi funi uku lwa, inkoma zetu zi nizji kunye nama tole, si nabu abafazi mketu lento yoku luwdi yeye nkenenkene.

"We do not care about what other people say. We are not cowards. We have plenty of cattle as well as calves. We can get wives in our own tribe; why should we fight? This war talk is all foolishness. We don't want to fight." The other *abafana* murmured:

"Ewe, ewe. U nyisile, u nyisile—Yes, yes. He is right, he is right." At the end of Upina's short protest the air was filled with the buzzing of many voices, as they argued about the project just stated to them by the *inkosi*. The *inkosi* was quite cool but wore a look of supreme contempt and disgust on his face. An *induna* stepped forward and cursed the assembled *abafana*, telling them that they were not true sons of stalwart Songelas of the past. The insulted *abafana* drowned his discourse by shouting and pointing their fingers at him—

"Nawe, nawe, nawe!—You too, you too, you too!" The *quweta* (chamberlain or head council man) stepped forward, held up his right hand for silence and made a short ringing and patriotic appeal. They listened to it till the end and then jeered him, shouting to him—

"Suka, hamba oyaku lala, kuze uqbe ubu tonga mbako.—Go away, you are sleepy; go and finish your sleep." Those on the outskirts of the meeting moved away until only those sitting on the ground remained, and even they were getting ready to move also. The *inkosi*, with his *amapakati*, looked on this manifestation of insubordination with glittering eyes. It was quite evident that they had become unruly. For the moment they were powerless to control them. Suddenly those congregated by the *sango* (gate) stood aside and opened a pathway. The babble of voices calmed down and the air seemed to cool, as a tall man with the triangular marking of the face and a pair of piercing eyes walked easily and slowly down the opening just made.

Those on the ground hastily rolled themselves out of the way. As he came steadily on not a word did he utter but merely glanced here and there at different individual *abafana*, who cast their eyes down and shuffled their feet uneasily if they were standing, or looked away if seated on the ground. The tall man reached the spot where the *inkosi* and the *amapakati* were standing. He observed—

"Ku shu shu nam hlandje.—It is warm today."

"Ewe mfo din.—Yes, very warm," the *inkosi* replied.

"Nina abafana nake sanuko yika?" began the witch-doctor. *"Iyana e fazweni ani kayiswa ndokuba kona imi konto nama tolo wabu ndku wa pula; izi kaka zaba, ndku zenza zi razuke, ilwani mba fana mbe inkosi uukani; niya ndazi zowuka zawuka—mfanyana!"*

"You, young warriors all, you are not afraid? You must go and fight; you will not be beaten because I will be there. Their spears and arrows will break as they are flung into the air; their shields I will have them torn by the spirits. Go into the fight, you warriors of the king. Wake up! You know my power. Hail, hail, young warriors!"

AN *INDUNA* jumped up and did a war dance. Several joined the first one. The assembled warriors watched them with critical eyes and pressed closer and closer. One of their number sang the first verse of *"Ngama ye fazo."*

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When the chorus came the whole lot of assembled warriors and the *inkosi* himself joined in. In a few moments the whole crowd were stamping their feet in time to the shouting music of the war song. The *inkosi* with a fighting-spear in his right hand roared in a voice that was heard above the singing:

"*Idabi, idabi, idabi!*—A sham fight, a sham fight, a sham fight!" The *indunas* and petty chiefs raced toward the *sango* shouting for the men that they commanded to follow them. Dozens and dozens of young *abafana* dived into huts empty-handed and came out with two or three fighting-spears clutched in the right hand or under the arm and a shield with a knob-kerry in the left; others had battle-axes, *zembe, um sika* (a close-cutting weapon for crowded quarters when the battle-ax can not be swung) others with bows and arrows.

They all rushed out of the *sango* shouting—

"*Umgene, idabi!*"

The *indunas* and petty chiefs called and led away their particular files of men. Down by the *dongas*, up and behind *maqinas*, into *ama hlati*, they jostled and hurried, not unlike a crowd of schoolboys getting ready to start on the game of hare-and-hounds. In a short space of time not a warrior was to be seen, and the throbbing silence was broken by a challenging voice far away. The *qira* and five or six petty chiefs blew long blasts on their horns several times. The sounds went over the *taffa* until it reached the hidden warriors.

Immediately there were sounds of rattling sticks, the clinking of metal as spears that had been thrown hit against stones, the shouting from hundreds of throats and the muffled thuds as knobkerries met hard skulls. The *inkosi* and the *qira* and a few *amapakatis* stood on top of a high *gina* watching the whole proceedings. What they saw was a very confused sight.

Here a small group were beating each other with knobbed sticks; others, entrenched behind small bushes, rocks and trees, shot flights of arrows at another group not very far distant who were also armed with bows and arrows. A larger crowd was surrounding a large growth of bushes where an opposing force of older *abafana* were hiding. From time to time those outside of the bushes threw heavy stones and sometimes a spear or two into the bushes, which always brought forth a protest to the effect that those in the bush were not *inyamakazi*, or game. But the fighting blood of the young *abafana* was fired, and the protests fell on deaf ears.

Hundreds of warriors were lying around with crushed skulls or a spear or three or four arrows sticking out of their dead bodies; for an *idabi*, though a sham fight, is carried out with all the earnestness and force of a real combat.

The opposing sides and ranks had been divided into two fighting bodies. The older warriors opposed the younger warriors—that is, those who had become "men" in the past four or five years—and both were evenly matched so far as arms and numbers were concerned. The difference was inside. The younger warriors had been insulted by the *inkosi* and the *indunas* who were hidden in the bush.

Several *abafana* grouped themselves together and with some *singa*, or sinew, two pieces of wood whittled to a fine point, and some fibrous wood, they made fire. After a time the fibrous wood began to smolder, then smoked and burst into flame. Dry wood was brought and a fire built; more wood was put on it until it became a bonfire. From this larger fire other smaller fires were made around the bush quite near the growing bush. When part of it crackled aflame, the green set up a stifling smoke. The bush became animated as the warriors inside milled about and went from side to side trying to find a way out.

There was a sudden shout from one side as a dozen smoke-blackened warriors burst through the flames, their bodies scorched. their eyes red from smoke. The younger warriors ran to that spot. Shouts, grunts and thudding of feet sounded from the other side which the outside warriors had just left. A hundred or so warriors, with singed eye-brows and scorched bodies, trampled over the red-hot embers out of the burning bush and fell on the flank of the younger warriors, who were taken by surprize.

The dozen or so older warriors, who had made the tactical feint in order to draw the main body of younger warriors to one side and save their own *abafana*, were almost done for. A mere handful were battling now; there was no chance of escape, even though their comrades had fallen on the flank of their enemy. The smaller group

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with bows and arrows left their entrenchments and joined in the grand mêlée. The *inkosi* looked on with a gratified expression on his face. He motioned to the *indunas* around him to blow on their horns the order to cease fighting.

They blew for a long ten minutes before the warriors would show any semblance of stopping, and at that they were reluctant to do so.

From the far distance groups of women with babies on their backs had been watching the *idabi* or fight. A cool breeze blew down which cooled the perspiring bodies of the warriors. They sang the song of victory; that is, the younger ones. They felt that they had disproven the charge—that they were not *amagwala*, or cowards. The older ones were quiet because the majority had been in the brush and were tenderly feeling of themselves, but they did not complain. The sun was already sinking and a haze had come up.

The *indunas* with the *inkosi* hurried toward the kraal, where they killed four oxen, dug a large pit and built a fire in it, and started to skin the beasts. One had already been skinned when most of the younger *abafana* arrived. They helped to skin the other three oxen, which were then quartered and put on the fire in the pits to roast. Warriors came trooping in every moment, some with bad wounds on their chests, others on their hands and arms, which the *iqira*, or witch-doctor, treated with his herbs, which soothed many cuts and burns.

Upina had a spear run through his calf at the thick end and a cut on the right shoulder; these the witch-doctor treated and bound up for him. These cases being cases of "state" he charged nothing to look after them.

SIXTEEN warriors were paired off, and a side of beef was given to each pair. They divided this in half, one taking breast, brisket and half of the ribs, the other from the ribs down to the leg of beef; the test was to see who could eat the whole of the portion given to him before daylight. Whoever did or was able to accomplish this test of trenchermanship would be accounted worthy and strong enough to go as a scout on the path and in the country when the raids took place or else go the rounds of the different kraals of the tribe and notify them to have an *idabi* as the tribe would be going on the war-path.

The sixteen young warriors started eating with great appetite. Upina was one of the lucky number who had been selected to try to pass in this test. An admiring and envious crowd of warriors stood around watching them eat. After a while they were ordered away by one of the *indunas*. In the far-away darkness hyenas laughed, jackals snarled, lions roared, and there was the spitting howl of leopards. All these denizens of the wild were feeding on the bodies of the *abafana* who had been killed in the *idabi*.

The moon rose in her last quarter, shone for a while and then waned. Yet still the *abafana* ate on. The stars twinkled above; the village was silent, except for the thud of cattle moving in the *sibayi*. Still they ate on, some in a dazed, mechanical way. Several were perfectly still—they had been overcome at so much eating. Upina ate and ate and ate until the meat lost its taste; his gorge rose; his stomach was so tight he could hardly breathe. He tried to get to his feet, but failed. Four or five times he tried. At the sixth try he staggered to his feet and walked drunkenly away.

In half an hour he was back and started to eat again. There was a sound as of some one being sick, but this did not bother him. When he had eaten until his stomach was tight again and he could hardly breathe, he staggered to his feet again; in a half-hour he was back again and commenced eating once more. When the morning light came and with it the *inkosi*, *iqira* and *amapakati*, they

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saw half a dozen young warriors in a comatose state from overeating. Nine others were sprawled in all kinds of positions, chewing languidly on with lack-luster eyes.

The sixteenth one was chewing and spitting out the soft ends of ribs of beef and with two large stones was cracking the socket-bone to get the marrow out. The *inkosi* looked on him with approval in his eyes and greeted him with—

"*Molofan.*—Good morning, young warrior."

"*Ewe, bawo.*—Yes, father," Upina returned.

"*U sa tya?*—You are still eating?"

"*Ndi sa lambili.*—I am still hungry." The *inkosi* smiled at this. So did the *amapakati;* but not the *iqira.*

"*U sem pla, u be yi ndado e nkulu ude uyi qibe icala le nkomo wedwa u yi tye na banina.*—You are young to be such a real man and eat a whole quarter of beef by yourself. Whom did you share it with?" the *inkosi* sternly demanded.

Upina went on breaking bones and replied—

"*Ndi yi tye ndi nedwa, ndi hle siee isusn sam si qine mpu ndize ndi baleke—pela kyama.*—I ate the meat by myself; I ate of it until my stomach became tight, tight, tight; after which I ran for a time, and the meat is finished." The *inkosi* and the *amapakati* laughed heartily. The *inkosi* ordered that he, Upina, be given an *umbuly,* stick, and a *metal,* or dagger, to show that he was an official news-bearer and a scout. He was given his instructions and told to be back when the *yanga* (moon) was gone.

With some *umpko*—that is, some meat and native bread done up in a small parcel—he set out on his appointed task. The sun was well on its day's journey, and some of the warriors had revived after their eating bout. Those who had eaten more than half were sent away on tasks similar to that which Upina had been sent upon. Those eating less were kept in the community, and made fun of by the other warriors who did not have to undergo the test.

FOUR days later Upina arrived at his own kraal and went into the presence of the *inkosi* there. He informed him of what he had done and what he had seen. When his report had been heard he was told to go and eat and have some sleep. No sooner was he out of the royal hut than the four large war drums, which stood six feet from the ground and took each three men to beat, began to roll and thunder out their message. They beat a sharp tattoo for about five minutes, then were still a space.

To the listening drummers there came an answering roll; then another from the east, from the west, from the north and from the south. The answer to the call of arms came. At different times the drummers would stop and listen to a roll, and when it came, they would burst out laughing at a joke that had been rolled out to them on a certain drum—for be it known they have a code of their own. So quick were their senses that they were able to translate the message received into spoken words were it one for the *inkosi's* attention. All this was done without anything ever having been put into written form, for they did not know what paper is—not to mention a pencil or pen.

Before the sun had reached its meridian the whole of the *taffa* or *veld* was alive with warriors in full war equipment, which was not very much so far as personal adornment went—an ostrich feather and a headdress so stuffed that if a blow was directed at the head, the headdress would soften the blow.

Some wore *inciyos* around their loins; some did not. Most had *imikonto od isikaka,* spears and shields, others bows and arrows, but very few had *ma zembes* or battle-axes, and the wicked quarter-weapon, *umsika.*

One and all were oiled, every portion of the body being treated. This was a safety measure so if their enemies got hold of them in a struggle there would be nothing to keep hold of. The air was filled with the *ngomas* of particular warriors. Here a group sang "*Dubula mfondini. Ha! Ha! Ha!*—Kill him, my friend. Ha! Ha! Ha!" with great feeling and enthusiasm. Another "*Aba Fan.*" It was not until a crowd of *ama ntombi,* set away by themselves, began singing "*Si ngun kosi wama o liwayo,*" that the whole crowd of warriors sang together, forty thousand of them joining in near and far with voices that made the earth quake, after which the warriors' challenging battle cry was made:

"*Zawka! Zawka! Zawka fanyana!*" Grounding of spears and sweeping of shields sounded like a thousand rolls of thunder put into one: the horns were blown, and the warriors became silent.

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On top of a small hill a tall man stood with folded arms. The assembled warriors looked at him in silence. He wore draped over his body an *enkade e nkulu*—leopard skin. He raised his arms high above his head and uttered a few words which were heard by every one in the clear, still air:

"*No kumboyisa, imikonto yabo yokupuka emoy in uzi nonka zabo zabu rasuka, ndako mbako zako enzeka ndaka zenza.*—Their spears will be broken in flight; their shields will be torn; you will conquer; I will be there that your victory be sure." Thousands of voices shouted in delight:

"*Wena! Wena! Wena!*—You! You! You!" There were cries—

"*Ku ya hanginal*—On we go!" Each petty chief took charge of the warriors from his own kraal, with the *indunas* looking after them, which was not difficult. They were arranged in companies, which on the open *taffa* were formed into rough regiments. Ten abreast—they were wonderful to look upon.

Their muscles rippled under their oiled bronze hides as they walked along with graceful, easy strides, unlike the soldiers of civilization with the machine-like, jerky stride. Their strapping chests and small waists made them seem like a mixed breed of sailor-men and prize-fighters. But they had not the rolling gait nor the "chin in" swagger which mark the workers in the two callings.

The war horns blew many blasts as different groups got into motion. They passed by where the *inkosi* and *amapakatis* were sitting under a tree. The scouts were ordered to advance well in front of the main body and keep the *inkosi* informed of how the unsuspecting next-door tribe was occupying its time. When night fell they were quite a distance from the kraal of Songelas.

Small fires were built, around which the warriors sat and told stories. The native is a real salamander. Even if he is alone and has a fire, he is content for the time. Lookouts were posted to guard against wild beasts. Just before the dawn, the warriors were awakened by the blowing of the horns, and once again they went on the march. Just after sunrise they passed the borderline of their own country into their enemy's. There a halt was called and the whole *umkosi* was divided into bands that were to go to the different divisions of the tribe they had come to war on.

As soon as they had received their orders these bands set off smartly under the leadership of petty chiefs—*inkosima* or *indunas*. No singing was allowed. Every few moments bands set off in all directions. These bands numbered from two thousand to four thousand warriors. At last there only remained the *inkosi's* own *gela* of *impis*. They set off toward *mpumalanga* (the rising sun) toward midday.

Three or four warriors were met carrying nothing in the way of weapons except a knobkerry each. These were scouts who had been out watching the kraal which the band of warriors they had met were to raid. Upina was one of the number.

HE ASKED for the *inkosi* and was directed to the center of the marching horde. He waited a space until the *inkosi* came abreast of him. The *inkosi* motioned to him to step up and keep step with the warriors. Upina stepped up beside the *inkosi* and greeted him—

"*Malo, bawo.*—Good day to you, great father."

"*Ewe, mfanyana.*—Yes, warrior," the *inkosi* returned. "*I bali yako?*—Your message?"

"*A bazi nto, bazizi denge saku mba qita ka sinyani inkosi.*—They do not suspect anything. They are fools. We will scatter them very easily, *inkosi.*"

The *inkosi* turned to the *iqira*, and questioned him—

"*Utina wena?*—What do you say?"

"*Ama tamba wam a yaka pendula xaana i langa le ishonile.*—My magic bones will announce that after the sun goes down," the *iqira* replied.

"*Emva wena.*—Behind you," the *inkosi* ordered Upina, and Upina obeyed. Exclamations broke out all along the front of the loose line as groups passed a certain point, going down a path in the forest by a *idinga* or pool of water. As Upina brought up the rear, he saw what had made the other warriors exclaim. It was the bleaching bones and skull of a *infene* or baboon with smaller ring-like bones across what had been the *infene's* throat.

There came back to his mind the first time he had gone out to *uku lusa* or look after the herds of cattle. *Inkawus* (monkeys) had pelted them with *maqeudes*. A big baboon had come down the tree to see the little one he and his companions had captured. When they had knocked it about and it simulated

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a faint one of his companions wrapped the dead *inyoka* or snake around its neck. They had then gone and left the baboon lying there with the snake around its neck, and eaten the young monkey. When Upina realized that the *infene* had lain there day in and day out and starved to death because it was too frightened to throw off the dead body of the *inyoka*, he burst out laughing.

The other warriors turned around and wanted to know—*uhleka ntoni?* He told them of the incident, and they joined in hearty laughter. The story went down the line from mouth to mouth as each warrior told it to the man in front of him. Soon they were all laughing so loudly that the *inkosi* ordered every one to "*peza*," yet in spite of that here and there an *umfan* laughed or grunted through his nose.

Some time before sunset a camp site was determined upon. Batches of fifteen or twenty *abafana* carried wood, brushes, and such to make *indheu e siti leyo* or rough roofless huts. Fires were not allowed.

Nevertheless the *iqira* made a small one by friction of two sticks, after which he brought out of his fur bag six small bones that had at one time been parts of *fhagu*, or wild hogs' trotters. He cupped his hands together with the *matambo* in them, and shook them for a minute or two. Then he took away his left hand, holding his right closed for a second or two.

He kept it closed and then opened it slowly, and the bones danced on his palm. He looked at them intently and then commanded them—

"*Hima!*—Stop!"

The bones stood still, erect on his palm. He called to them—

"*Enzani.*" They became animated.

With his left hand he cleared a space on the ground, of twigs and stones, all the while intently looking at the bones dancing on his palm. With a swift motion of his right arm he spilled all the bones on the cleared space. They fell in a straggling heap. For an instant they lay on their sides, but the next moment were dancing again. The *iqira* joined his two hands over them and commanded—

"*Hima.*" The bones stopped but did not stand erect; they lay on their sides.

He slowly opened his arms wide, hands poised with the palms toward the ground, two or three times and then stopped. Dropping his hands to his knees as he took a kneeling position, he slowly raised his head and looked at the tense faces of the *abafana* surrounding him. They stopped breathing in order to hear his verdict whether they would go on the war-path that night or not. In a deep-toned voice he spoke—

"*Ama tambo wam ati hayi kodwa ndaku mbona ngou fana o ya ndi mbonela.*—My magic bones say no, but I will see through the eyes of a warrior who will see for me." With that he picked up a knobkerry and brought it down on the head of the nearest warrior, who happened to be Upina, and stunned him. Upina fell down on the ground like a stone that has been thrown into the air and returns. The other *abafana* moved uneasily, but they were under the *iqira's* spell.

The *iqira* took something out of his fur bag and threw some of it into the fire which made it blaze up and turn blue. The warriors put their hands to their mouths and exclaimed—

"*Kudaku!*"

The *iqira* then went over to where Upina lay and arranged his inert body in a sitting position facing the fire, his head falling on his chest, his body sagging forward. The *iqira* left him and went on the other side of the fire. He sat there for a few seconds staring into the blue blaze and then lifted his eyes and looked at Upina compellingly and commanded him:

"*Xela zonki izi nto ozi mbonayo yenza.*—Speak to us all the things that you see now!" Upina sat silent for a second or two and then spoke:

"*Ndi mbona umzi kan Sindo mba ne xala, a kuku mba tongo abafana mba kalipile mba meli ifazo mba ya.*—I see the kraal of Sindo. They are uneasy. There is no sleeping; the warriors are alert. They are ready to fight; they are—" And Upina wakened as if he had fallen asleep, instead of having been knocked senseless. The *abafana* shook their heads in wonderment. Others had their hands on their mouths. Upina put his hand to his head where he had been felled by the knobkerry and felt the lump tenderly. When he brought his hand away it was sticky wet with blood.

The fire had sunk low, looking like a piece of blue cloth with a light under it. The *iqira* sat still and silent on the other side of the dying fire, gazing fixedly straight into space. The *inkosi* walked up to him. Without looking up the *iqira* spoke.

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"Inkosi, masiye emzini kam Sindo, saku mba yisa lumgisn umkosi—mdi kona-inkosi. —Let us go and fight tonight at um Sindo's kraal; we shall conquer; get your warriors ready; I am here."

"Kulungile," the *inkosi* replied, and went into the darkness to find his *mapakati* and instruct them what had been decided on and give out the order for marching and what kind of tactics were to be used in order to gain victory and overcome the kraal of um Sindo. The *indunas* were given their orders, informed of the strategy to be employed and told to take their men away into the dark of the forest. They went.

NOT the breaking of a twig nor the rattle of loose stones was to be heard. There was no moon, and what wind there was was used in order to keep on the leeward side of wild animals that were feeding, and whose roars and calls could be heard. Batch after batch went away. The men who waited their turn rubbed their bodies with lumps of fat of sheep or oxen they had brought along in their fur bags or packs of food. The last batch left. The *iqira* got up slowly, put some earth and sand on the fire to put it out, and walked away into the night.

An *induna* with a few warriors squatted down in the darkness trying to make a fire by rubbing two sticks together in the usual way. The warriors around him shielded him so that when a spark was at last generated by the constant friction it would not be seen by the warriors on watch inside the kraal they were about to raid. When the spark had set light to the soft, fibrous matter that the *induna* put on it, small twigs were held over it, their ends bound together and greased well with fat. With a crackling sound and a lot of spluttering they caught a light.

The *induna* manipulated them until they were alight all around; then he got up, stamped the fire out, being very careful that no sparks or cinders flew about, blew out the lighted flame on the twigs, leaving them their red hot heads, thrust the whole thing behind his back and ordered his little band to *vuka mi hambe*—get up and march. They went along quietly, picking their way in the dark. The *induna* walked behind them, leaving no chance whereby the lighted twigs he carried might be seen. From out of the dark in front of them there loomed something with a jagged outline, darker than the night. It was the thorn fence that surrounded the kraal. At a word from the *induna* the whole band dropped to their hands and knees and crept up to the fence. Arrived there, the *induna* cautiously blew the twigs to a flame. The long, wicked-looking thorns of the *umga* tree that make up the fence were gathered in the dark and piled up on top of the twigs. The thorns, being dry, caught fire very quickly. The warriors crowded closer to the *induna*. The fire became larger as more thorns were put on. The *induna* called Upina from where he was standing and gave him a message:

"Mba kelele e sangweni um lilo u ya tsa. —Tell them at the gate that the fire is burning brightly."

Upina vanished away. Four minutes later a thundering shout was heard:

"Songelal Songelal Songelal SONGELAI" It came from where the gate was. There was a thudding of many feet inside the kraal, as the warriors rushed toward the gate in defense of it. The *induna* sprang away from the fire, and his little band poured the flame under the thorn fence. The red flames set the dry fence afire, and in a few moments the whole thorn fence was ablaze, lighting up the scene as by magic.

Warriors leaped out from the darkness. They poured into the breach made by the fire on the thorn fence, shouting to their comrades—

"Si yeze.—We are coming." Through the kraal they raced on their way to the gate. Half-way there they were met by some warriors of the kraal who yelled their war-cry:

"Um Sindol Um Sindol Um Sindol" Battle-axes flashed in the dancing flames as they were wielded by numberless warriors. There was the slam of a knobkerry as it hit against a *si kaka*. Women shrieked, children yelled and the cattle screamed as they gored each other in their terror. Grunts and taunts filled the air, mingled with the challenging cries. The warriors of um Sindo fought manfully; but the odds were against them, even though the kraal was a large one. The flanking movement was telling. Also they had not greased their bodies; consequently at close quarters they were at a disadvantage because they were unable to grasp hold of their opponents; besides they were not all equipped with wicked close-quarter weapons, *um sika*, which the

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umkosi of Songela used with telling effect, especially so among the panic-stricken women who came out of their burning huts.

The mothers were ripped from knee to hip, from thigh to breast. Suckling babies and little children were picked up by their little legs, swung through the air and dashed against the ground, their little heads exploding with a soft flop! The cattle broke down the *simbayi* (stockade) trampling and goring to death the warriors of um Sindo's kraal. This was the finishing touch, for early in the night they had been divided because of Songela's strategy in making the flank movement, but until then the two groups had been fighting back to back, with those at the gate, the cattle *sibayi* between them.

The warriors of um Sindo's kraal instantly knew that the cattle had not broken through of their own accord when they heard the vigorous war-cry "*Songela!*" behind them coming from the *sibayi;* still they fought on; there was nothing else for them to do, for if they gave up they would be shown no mercy. So while those in front fought the Songelas, those behind tried to stop the stampeding cattle by putting their eyes out and thrusting spears up their nostrils. But like a tidal wave the cattle relentlessly came on and swept over them. Both sections of Songela's *umkosi* gave way before the terror-stricken cattle.

THE morning sun struggled through the light *inkungo* or mist, and lit up the scene of the night's terrible carnage. Over here a handful of *abafana* were herding together a crowd of boys who were very frightened, their ages ranging from about six to thirteen years. They were being marshaled into some sort of order in order that they might be taken back to the Songela's kraal, trained to be warriors and in time when they became *abafana* to come back and war on their own tribe of people. The native thoroughly understands the fact that one must start to train the mind when it is still unformed, even as the farmer delights over fallow ground when it is to be had.

Over there at another side of the kraal was a crowd of well-formed girls whose ages ranged about the same as the captured boys', their lives having been spared also because the Songelas were able to make use of them. These girls were to be taken back across the border and distributed among the different kraals to the *inkosanas* or *indunas* as wives who would have children that would grow up and also go and make war on their mothers' people.

The group of boys and girls were kept separate for fear of confusion. A number of warriors went about the kraal looking to see if any adults were alive. Where a man writhed in silent pain, a knobkerry whirled in the air in the hands of an *umfan* and crashed against his skull. A baby cooed in the morning sun beside the body of its dead mother. It chuckled merrily as it was swung through the air by one of its legs in the grasp of a stalwart *umfan*. The merry chuckle was cut short as its little head was dashed against a rock.

A heavy cloud of smoke hung over all. The air was filled with the smell of burned wood and roasted flesh or the dead bodies of um Sindos. An *umkosi* lay on the hot embers by the thorn fence that used to be, and which was now merely a large circle of white ashes. Joyless, smoking huts were everywhere. By the *sibayi*, on two sides of it, were some mounds of um Sindo's valiant warriors, some with terrible gashes from their knees upward, others with *imikontos* transfixed to their bodies, others with part of the shoulder cut down where a battle-ax had been used. Nearly all had the imprint of hoofs on their backs, making it seem as if the devil himself had been there; but it was only the hoof-marks of the cattle that had stampeded over them in the night.

The *iqira* suddenly appeared followed by the *inkosi, mapakatis, indunas* and *umkosi*. He waved his arm in a grand sweep, remarking:

"*Kangela! Ndi ti Kangela! Mbi ndi nga tsongo? Mbi ndi tsilo, uku mba mbi ndi ngeko nge mi yisiwe, mbonke abaka sindo mba file, abetu aba nigi. Ndim lo qua.*— Look! I say, look! Did I not say we would conquer? I did say we would conquer. If I had not been present you could not have conquered. All the warriors of um Sindo are dead; very few of ours are dead. I did it, only I."

The *umkosi* walked about picking up *sikaka imikonto ma qudo*, weapons that they thought might be of any use. A certain number of them had been wounded. Upina had had a spear thrust through his left palm; it had been bound up by the *iqira* with some healing herbs. The *inkosi* was

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suffering from a badly bitten right arm.

He himself had met and killed um Sindo during the night by getting hold of his throat and tearing it out after um Sindo had lived up to his name—Temper. As has been remarked before, the *inkosi* was an *um fo om kulu* (a big man) being about six feet six inches tall with a chest measurement of about forty-three inches and weighing around two hundred and eighty pounds. His one great common accomplishment was to eat half a sheep at one sitting. Therefore it need hardly be said he was as strong as an ox, literally speaking.

At last the order was given to round up the cattle, sheep and goats, which had strayed quite a distance away. The *abafana* in charge of the captured boys were sent ahead. The cattle were driven toward the border. The girls were marched immediately behind the herd. The *inkosi* and his *mapakati* walked along behind them gloating over their victory. The warriors scampered like a lot of children over the landscape at will. Discipline was relaxed because what had been set out for them had been accomplished. This had been a raid and not a tribal war; otherwise the most severe discipline would have been enforced by the *inkosi*. An *umfana* was made fun of as he led half a dozen mongrel curs behind him with *intambo* tied around their necks.

The *iqira* had disappeared—where? No one knew. The cattle climbed the high *qina*, slowly followed by the little herd of captive *zi ntombi*. They topped the rise and disappeared from sight as they went down on the other side. The *inkosi* and his *mapakati* followed them soon after. The *abafana* yelled in delight as they chased some hares that they had aroused.

Back in the kraal—that one once under the rule of um Sindo—hyenas and jackals slunk in and out sampling the different dead bodies of warriors. In the sky was a long, black line of vultures in flight on their way to gorge themselves at the gutted and beshambled kraal. As to how they and the hyenas, with the jackals, were able to tell where anything had been killed or was dead, that is for the naturalist and ornithologist to discover and explain.

The vultures landed with a clumsy flop. They walked along with a very self-important air, with the bald head and the hard eyes of a thing that is never satisfied. The white feathers at the chest looked like the white of a dress-shirt front. In all they were not unlike tired business men going to a show. The blazing sun set the chemical reactions in the bodies working, so that when night-tide came the air around was not unlike that about a mucilage plant.

FOUR days later, the boys, cattle, *zi ntombi*, the *inkosi*, and warriors all arrived at their kraal together, singing *"Vumani a ma tsudyiola mbo hlahlo."*

The women and the children ran out to meet them. Other bands had arrived before them. The warriors gave the *mkosi* (the military salute); then another special personal salute for the *inkosi*, as different clans, that had not been able to arrive in time before the raids had been instigated, were present now. The royal salute was tremendous as more than one hundred thousand throats shouted:

"Grrowl Grrowl Grrowl O ka Songelal" Not once but a dozen times they shouted it as they stamped the ground and grounded their *imikonto* till the earth trembled as in a quake.

Tens of thousands of cattle, sheep, and goats had been captured. The tribe was *tyebile ka ku——— lul Ka — ku — lul Ka ku————lul* The language not having any strong adjective, but being very descriptive, the native demonstrates or illustrates his wealth by saying he is ve——ry rich, the longer the interval in the joining of the word the larger being the quantity implied, be it cattle, land or distance. Therefore the tribe was very well off, and would soon become the dominating tribe among all the lesser ones, because they had the boys to become warriors and the *intombis* to breed more men.

There was dancing and feasting. In between times the *inkosi* made distribution of cattle to the different *indunas* and *abafana*, also of the *amantombi*. Upina was made into an *induna yesi toba* and was given five head of cattle and three goats, and an *intombi* as a second *umfazi*. This was getting on in the world.

He took his new *umfazi* to his hut and informed *waku qala* of the new addition. Malanga's—that was his first *umfazi's* name—eyes glittered as she eyed the new *umfazi*. She really loved her husband,

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Upina, and the thought of sharing him with this girl from another tribe, for whom no *lombola* of cattle had been given, seemed too much to ask of her. Malanga knew, of course, that in the course of time Upina would add three or four *abafazi* to his household as a sign of prosperity and the dignity of his worldly position in the *kohla;* but this "*nkazana*" from another tribe!

Malanga flew into a temper, a temper fed by an all-consuming jealousy that knew no bounds. She told Upina she would not *yeka lam fazi* in her house, that she would kill her the moment she *mbeka u nyau lake* inside the *cango.* Upina brought the new *umfazi* in. Malanga set on her in a fury. Upina tried to loosen Malanga's hold on the new *umfazi.* The new *umfazi* was no weakling or coward; but she was powerless in the face of Malanga's blind, jealous, yet just, rage. Upina strode over to where his sleeping-mat was leaning against the wall, and from among his collection of sticks he brought out an *um nqayi,* or wife-beater. He strode back to where the two women were struggling; and, swinging it in the air, he brought it down against Malanga's naked body.

The shock of sudden pain loosened her hold on the other girl, who darted out of the door, out of harm's way. Upina continued to beat Malanga until she collapsed to the floor, where she sat shaking with great sobs. He looked at her for a second or two, and something got into his throat that he could not swallow. He suddenly dashed out of the hut with the *nqayi* in his hand in search of the new *umfazi,* and, when he found her, to her puzzled surprize he administered a terrible and painful beating and felt immediately better. That night after the evening meal had been eaten Upina went in the *kohla* hut, and was greeted heartily by all the men there, who praised him for the way he had handled his *umfazi.* He was an *indoda* now, and that was the only way to handle them. A glow of great satisfaction went all over Upina. He had tasted power and liked the taste of it. He wanted *okune.*

This is the fifth of six pictures of native African life, by Santie Sabalala, each complete in itself. The last appears in the January 20th issue.

THE COMING OF THE FIRST WHITE MEN

by Earl H. Emmons

THE tragic story of the first known white men in the Black Hills is told by a slab of sandstone about twelve inches square, which was found in March, 1887, in a cave on Lookout Mountain near Spearfish, S. D. Scratched on the stone—evidently by a knife-point—is the following message:

Came to these hills 1833 seven of us De Lacompt Ezra Kind, G. W. Wood, T. Brown, R. Kent, Wm. King, Indian Crow. all ded but me Ezra Kind. Killed by Inds beyond the high hill got our gold June 1834.

Reverse:

Got all the gold we could carry our pony all got by Indians. I have lost my gun and nothing to eat and Indians hunting me.

The records of the Hudson's Bay Company show that in the year 1834 this company bought $18,000 of gold dust from a band of Indians who came from this part of the Hills. The stone now is in the possession of John Cashner of Spearfish, S. D.

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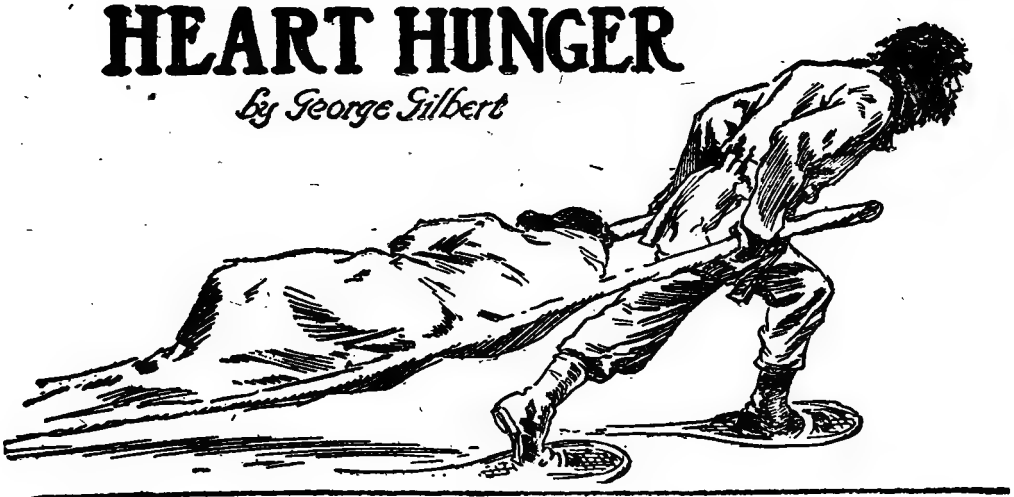
HEART HUNGER

by George Gilbert



Author of "Quick-Draw Sims," "The Jack-Rabbit," etc.

BIG Peter Ward's heart was hungry.

Peter was in his little shack that was stubbed in against the bulge of a little knoll a bit back from Hell Cat River. The knoll broke the wind; the brush between Peter's front door—his only door—and the stream was thin, so he could see any one who went up or down on the ice when the going was good, and supposing any one but Peter ever would go either up or down the stream that he had scouted out, named, and was now trapping.

It was a virgin stream, so far as Peter's skill in woodcraft—deeply subtle that skill was, too—could discern. It hadn't been trapped before. It was all that a stream should be—sheltered in places, open in others, early freezing and so offering a good highway up or down to the ends of the various trap-lines Peter had laid out in the little valleys emptying into Hell Cat.

Peter wouldn't see a human being on that river, but he wanted to be where he could, if any one came. And as he had that thought, for the thousandth time, he found himself saying, half aloud—

"But what's the use bein' where you c'n see a river no one else'll ever come on to all Winter?"

Then he snubbed himself short with:

"Talkin' to yourse'f again, eh, Peter? You need some one to talk to, or, by Cripe, you'll be whisperin' to the birds before Spring."

Peter had played the well-worn records of his little disk machine till they were actually made raucous. He had read every scrap over ten times in every rag of magazine and paper that he had packed in, around or between things, and mighty few they were, too, even at the first.

Peter was fed to the brim, for he was a good cook and game had been plentiful; fish fool-crazy to take the hook or run against the tines of Peter's spear. And Peter's poke would be full when he sold his catch months later. For the kindred of the wild had fairly trooped into Peter's traps ever since the first sets had been made. So, on the score of worldly success, Peter was able to rank himself as at least a three-hundred per cent. hitter.

His tobacco had held out; he had plenty of matches left, even a few dried peaches to stew with his last cupful of rice to make a fake Christmas pudding three days hence. He had tea, a little sugar, salt, pepper. In fact, there wasn't a whizzing thing Peter lacked in all this world except talky-talk. Just words, conversation, with a husky, son-of-a-bench-legged-saw-buck of a genuine, A1 he man.

Oh, boy! To sit down, across table, box or tree stump and talk, just gabby-gab, with a two-legged, two-armed, two-eyed, two-eared, fog-horn-voiced specimen of *homo sapiens, alias* . . .

By the humped-up-hummy-dum! *Homo Sap, alias* Bill Harmath!

That was it. Peter wanted to talk to Billo.

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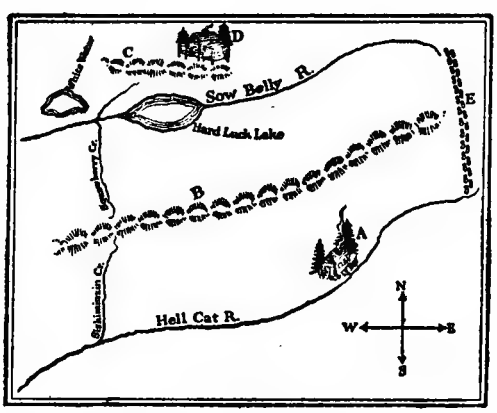
Good old Billo! Over in White Water Billo was, Winter-bound because he had pinched one foot in between two stones last Autumn while they two were digging out a big dog fox that Billo wanted to catch alive for a breeder and send down-trail to his brother at Rupert's Factory.

Billo was in White Water, hobbling, unable to hit the long trails, pressed in by companionship with the fifty-one other folks in White Water, when he'd rather be out with only Big Peter or maybe alone. For Billo, when you knew him, was a *man*, and loved the open and—well, Peter loved Billo; so he'd told him where Hell Cat was located. And when a man lets another in on where a virgin stream is, why he loves him, clear through!

Peter lighted his pipe all over again. It could be done! He could let the traps go several days. The going was good. He could go down Hell Cat to where the Siskiminzin made in, go up that, fight his way over the height-o'-land, get down the Squawberry and hit the Sow Belly, that



A—Pete Ward's shack.
B—Height o' Land between headwaters of Siskiminzin and Squawberry.
C—White Water.
D—Blue Lake Factory.
E—Route Billo and Callahan took getting from Sow Belly Valley over Height o' Land into Hell Cat.

would lead to White Water. By John Rogers, he'd do just that little thing! Travel light, fast. Billo was working in White Water a hundred miles away. That was nothing. Only a good bit of exercise for Big Peter Ward. The shoeing was good. The last snows had packed well. Why stay in his own shack, when by merely walking over to White Water he could talk with Big Billo? Who would?

Ward hadn't even a dog to go with him, for his cur friend had been lured away from home three nights before by a vampire she wolf who had tolled him to where the pack could make him into wolf-feed. But then Peter wouldn't mind the lonely trip, for at the end of it would be Billo—cuss his hide for a whale of a hairy-breasted bear-cat, anyway!

Whereat Peter's eyes watered just a bit, there being no one to rag him because of it. Billo! Remember that time Billo went under the log-jam on the Squawberry and Peter'd yanked him out, at the risk of being sucked in himself. Then that time they'd both stood off that passel of white slavers in Seattle when they had found the kidnaped and still unspoiled girl in the moll ken and believed her story and fought a way out for her.

Had seen her run and make a good getaway while they stayed to take the brunt of it and be haled into court for disturbing the peace. They had taken their big fine in silence, so that the girl's name wouldn't be made public—what a whale of a belt Billo did give that fat geezer that ran the moll ken. . . .

By the humped-up-hummydum! Big Peter Ward *had* to see Big Bill Harmath. He was going to. The next big storm would make it so he could not get over to White Water for weeks, perhaps until Spring released the long trails. But now, through the fortunate chain of weather events, he could get out, and, if he had luck, get back. There was a big chance that maybe he wouldn't get back, but life was a chance. He'd see Billo. . . .

The little room was filled with a smoke fog now. Scenes of other days—and nights—with Billo, kept looming up in Peter's thoughts. Billo was tall and muscular, without a bit o' fat. Quick on his feet, with a voice that rumbled and even rasped from his well-haired chest. Billo could talk man-talk. He'd a laugh that made his own big body fairly shake, and his hands were hard and solid and he carried a wallop in both. . . .

Peter hitched his box-seat back and put his elbows on the apology for a table and his jowls into the palms of his hands. He sucked avidly at the pipe.

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There was the time he'd met Billo in Forty Mile, away back in umpty nine. He hadn't a red, but Billo had dug up a few and shared . . . what a jim dandy Billo was! Then that time he'd sold a big catch and came into Dawson for a whirl and had found Billo with the bottom clean out of *his* poke. And of course they'd shared then down to the last red and gone out on to the long trails in the Spring in debt, but hopeful, and had fought for and won a good stake by snowfall.

Say, if there was a load to carry, Billo, he'd carry more than half, unless you watched him. He never hid up a plug o' terbac, or a dab o' sugar for himself. No, he shared what he had and labor, and kept his troubles to himself, Billo did.

"Moon'll be up at three." Peter Ward banged his balled fist on to the table. "I c'n hit the trail then shoe it till dark tomorrow, make a big push next day—weather seems to be holdin' an' why not? By ——a-mile, I'll do that little old thing. I'm going to see Billo an' talk him deaf, dumb an' blind. Moon'll rise at three. I'll set the jingler for that time."

Peter lopped on to his furs, snugged in and listened to the wind making odd noises on the round of the knoll, heard the sift of the dry snow as it went in little windrows along the river's level, heard a lone wolf somewhere out beyond sound the pack-call —and then——

Peter was awake. The moon was coming. The jingler was calling. Peter shut off the alarm, looked out of his one precious pane of glass. The snow was silvering; the long sharp shadows of the larches with their meager limbs made curious patterns on the white surface.

Peter made ready for the trail, saw that his matches were safe, swung up his little pack of grub and blankets, felt to see that his meat-gun—a quarter-length barrel and cylinder .22 set on to a .45 frame—was at the left side of his belt, butt to front; felt again to make sure his trail-ax was hung to the belt's right side, made the door secure against the visit of wolves or carcajou and then began the long shuffling hike on snowshoes that he hoped would end by meeting up with old Billo over in White Water.

The moon was coming stronger, stronger. The going was good. Peter was in A1 condition for the big effort. And so he went for his jaunt to see his friend.

The moon swung up, mystic, wonderful. The snow was good underneath with just a bit of fluff atop to make it go "*siss-siss-siss-siss*" as the shoe-frames whiffed it like a powder. The air was still; sounds like rifle-shots told of limbs exploding from the excess of cold. Once a sullen roar told of a tree bursting and then the river would boom under the ice. Oh, it was lovely going, and every step meant that much nearer to Billo and talky-talk. . . . Some cold too, but then when you're a he man cold is good.

Peter fell into the rhythm of the trail. The moon swung higher; stars paled, a dim grayness came to replace the silver sheen. A little snow began to fall, but Peter's weather nose told him it was just a flurry. He ate a cold snack as he shoed along. Fine going. Every muscle fit, heart like a Nome dredge's pump for strength; eyes all over that last attack of snow-blind, every ounce of him enjoying life. And at the trail's end—just Billo, with his bull voice and ham hands that would baste Peter between the shoulders and Billo's tongue that would say—

"Well, Pete, you son-of-a-bench-legged-beagle's grandmother!"

Peter laid down to it at that thought. He had to make it into White Water where Billo was.

"Easy, so easy; there's the old Siskiminzin; half-way now, and it's only night o' the first day," Peter thought, as he saw the break in the stream's banks ahead, where the side valley made in.

"Even if that last half is harder going, with this start I ought to be into White Water at noon day before Christmas, instead of Christmas morning, as I planned. I didn't know there was that much go in me with all them hard years behind. I'm forty-five now an' Billo, he's forty-seven. What d'y'know 'bout that?"

Peter spurted then and now he could see the junction plain.

"Nothing to it; I got this trip faded," he was gratulating, then——

HE SAW the ring of dark forms, leaping in, out, over, snapping, snarling. Peter ran, unloosening meat-gun and ax, and then he had begun to pour the lead into them, little pellets that were inadequate. But the wolves feared the thing-that-stung-from-afar and gave ground,

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and the bold ones that lagged he slashed into with his ax and then the skulkers went, licking deep wounds and faced their doom from the pack as the blood-lust mounted from the smell of the life-blood Peter's ax had let out. All this had passed in a swirl of effort and Peter bent over to see if there was life in the man the wolves had jumped there.

"Faugh!" Peter thought. "Billy Kaboush!"

Yes, Billy Kaboush, crossed with black and red and bad white, with a stripe or two of yellow—sneak, hooch-fighter, doper, mean, onery, no good—his trail showing he'd come *down* the Siskiminzin.

"How'd y'come 'ere like this?" Peter demanded, towering over the crumpled figure.

The wastrel stirred, began to gabble:

"Goin' to Pike Factory, lost grub, got weak, eyes bother me; wolves come, got down, no get up; weak like ——; what river dis?"

"Yes, weak, pulin', no 'count, apt t' die an' who'd care if you did, Kaboush," thinking for a moment of what this meeting meant.

"Can't get him to White Water under four days. C'd go alone —— quick. Up the river to my place, it'll take two days with him to drag an' then he may not last that long; lungs gutted with frost, hooch an' —— knows what else——"

The man huddled there began to gabble again, piteously—

"Don' leaf me, I down—wolves get me——"

"Who'n ——'s goin' to leave you? Judgin' others by yourself? You'd leave me, soon 'nuff, after you'd knifed me to make sure I wouldn't tell you'd looted what's in my poke," Peter justly accused the other who now was so helpless. "I know you're lyin' 'bout bein' on the way to Pike Fact'ry, but then you never told the truth.

"No seeing Billo!" Peter mourned. "Nopeeee! You got t' stray 'cross my path, eh. You! You're no good. If you were trappin' skunk, skunks'd smell your taint on the traps, like 't was a brother's. If you was trappin' for fisher, you wouldn't get a smell —beside you Billo's so fine that you belong to diff'rent tribes—an' I got to give up seein' old Billo to drag you back to my shack an' nurse you an' listen to you wail because you ain't got dope or hooch or somethin' else an' watch that you don't knife me or run away with my shoes. Oh, ——!"

Tugging off his blanket-roll, Peter wrapped the cast-off snugly and warmly. He set about it to form a makeshift *traverse* on to which to strap the broken scamp whose name was a byword through all the outlands of the North. With ax and knife, strips of bark and cord, Peter made the *traverse*, then strapped the bit of human wreckage to it, took hold of the handles and began to fight his way back up-stream.

The man was far gone, he knew, and he had scanty chance to get him to his own shack in time. If he camped in the open they might get snowed in deep. Then at the shack Peter had some medicines. They might help. He'd do his duty. So, bending to the task, going every moment farther from old Billo, tugging along that sodden, worthless bit of humankind, his heart yearning for the companionship, the talky-talk, his shoulders fairly aching for the thwack of that brawny palm, Peter went wearily back-tracking.

All the buoyancy of the down-trail; all the hope had died within him. He'd tug that Kaboush to his shack, nurse him, lose his chance of getting to White Water. For with the year's turn the going would be too bad to permit it with certainty. So he'd miss seeing old Billo, the son-of-a-gander.

The wheeze of the lungs of Kaboush was dismal in intensity. Peter knew what it meant. It meant the man was worse. But then, even though there was no chance, he, Peter, had to do his duty. The unwritten law of the trail reads:

"Help the helpless, without question. Don't desert a man who is down!"

Billo, Peter thought, would approve of what he was doing. Billo would have tried to save even Kaboush. It was right, but right is often hard on the righteous! So Peter fought it out in his soul as he strained forward, the dregs of his former enthusiasm gone cold in him. His feet lagged; the miles seemed long—longer—longest——

A half-light succeeded to the day's. The trail was plain and Peter kept going, going, going——

Dawn found him, after having hardly rested for over twenty-four hours, worrying his way forward. The wheezing of the stricken waif was less loud, which was most alarming. Peter went to look at the pinched

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face by the light of the coming dawn. Truly, Johnny Kaboush's wicked time was limited.

He strove on, on, on—then a whoop, up-trail.

A dog-team was coming there, fast, a North West Police team. It was Sergeant Callahan's hail. Horrie Callahan, out after some one! Callahan had passed right by Peter's shack, up there only a little way now.

Callahan flicked the long lash out to stop his team. After the usual mix-up, the dogs sat down and began to yawn, goody-goody, yet all the time with more than half an eye out to nip a team-mate or human. The leader put his nose up and howled—long, tremulously.

"Death wail," Peter shivered, despite his usual self-control. And then the others took up the tale. Peter glanced at the still form on the *traverse* as Callahan mushed toward him, calling as he came:

"What'y'got? Came by your shack comin' down. I'm out after Johnny Kaboush. He knifed a gal in Marlowe's shebang in White Water. Got away on some one's spare shoes, all full o' dope an' hooch. It was drifting the night he made the break an' I lost the trail. Thought he went up Sow Belly. I got to get him, dead 'r 'live."

"You got him, right here—dead," and Peter pushed back the blanket to show Callahan the blue-pinched face. "I thought I'd get him to my shack, get some straight whisky into him. I got a little for medicine. Try to nerve him up. I found him ringed with wolves, down, mouth o' Siskiminzin."

"Jayrusaleum, the Golden! Then he fooled us all, went right over the height o' land, not up or down Sow Belly. But I'm glad it's cleared up, for Kaboush was a bad one to be out on the trails, maybe in some Indian bunch, teachin' them all sorts o' deviltry all Winter long."

"What'll you do with him now?"

"I'll take the body in—no, I got to travel too fast to get after another case that's hangin' fire over at Blue Lake Factory. Squaw-and-*chechako* case; usual kind, knife in the ribs, squaw's man hittin' the high places to'rd Big Barrens, where his main tribe is. There's a big, big storm a-comin', Pete. I c'n feel it in that knife-wound I got two years ago. I won't go back way o' White Water. I'll cut around by Hard Luck Lake and over the height o' land there, to Blue. We'll hang this"—pointing to the body of Kaboush—"up so the wolves won't get it."

Callahan, always sure of his weather-lore, spoke from conviction as to the coming storm. Peter had been getting the feel of it for hours. He knew that its coming would end all hopes, in his present situation, of his getting over to and back from White Water that Winter. If he went and barely got through, he'd probably be there until Spring or until weeks had passed.

Well, then, let the trapping wait. He'd chance it, for his furs were safe, unless against a bear's intrusion into his shack. No bears stirred in real Winter. He'd risk getting back in time—inside of a few days or weeks or in Spring—what did a few furs or some money amount to, compared with the chance of talky-talk with old Billo? He'd go down with Cal, as far as they could travel together, and they'd go fast, with the team, the trail already opened. So Peter thought as they worked to hang the skin-and-bones of Billy Kaboush up out of the reach of wolves.

That done, Callahan made ready to mush again, although Peter thought he ought to be boiling tea. Peter broached his plan for going back down-trail with the sergeant, who cut him short.

"No, Pete, I'm goin' to travel fast an' light——"

"Wow! Cal! I c'n travel a few my own self," showing how hurt he was at the rebuff. Callahan spluttered again:

"Better go back to your shack, Pete. I f'rgot to tell you the door was ajar as I c'm by. O' course I didn't inquire why. Thought you was maybe airing out terbac smoke, you're such a cloud-maker, Pete. Hy, man; now that I think, with you away an' all, wolves might got in, or a bear——"

"An' you didn't stop to see, Cal? Didn't call as you went by, even; couldn't see tracks comin' out, none goin' back in—" showing how he was hurt by Cal's floundering excuses for jamming right past the shack of him, Peter Ward.

"I had my own bus'ness to 'tend to, Pete," very gruffly; "an' I'm a-goin' right down the trail to 'tend to the rest o' it. I'm goin' 'lone, —— it. I got to hurry——"

"If you feel that way—*mush then!*"

Peter watched Cal make ready for the trail, a sullen yearning to give vent to his mounting wrath against Callahan, the dead

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wastrel, the world in general, held in leash with a terrific effort of stern will.

Peter was hurt—heart-bruised. He did not even give Callahan a good-by yellup or "so long." He just turned his big back upon the disappearing dog-team, and its driver as he faced up-trail, blazing red thoughts pringling in his seething brain, about like this:

"The stuck-up, snarly, strutting, hang-dog, set up over others, just because he'd been made sergeant the year before."

Why, Peter knew Callahan when he was only a new chum and had helped the green private to learn much of his best woodcraft. And now! How did Cal know the way into Hell Cat, anyway?

Callahan had gone off, leaving him beside the trail like a fool. The body of Kaboush, swaying in the tree, was poor consolation for what Peter had missed.

"Yes," addressing it mentally, "I lose my chance o' seein' Billo for you! I save you, about a corpse, to drag you clear up here to be a corpse. You had just enough breath to lure me away from Billo. I might just 's well left you where I found you, for all the good I've done either you or me."

Then he began to go up-river again. He thought over Callahan's pursey manner, his little swaggering way of dismissing him—Peter Ward, real Old-Timer. Oh, well, those bud-chewers were not like the old men. . . .

He came in view of the shack, not caring much if the door were open, the furs he had cached spoiled by wolves, fouled by fisher, the whole interior wrecked by brown bear. But then there'd be no bear in the dead of winter. Yes, the door was a bit ajar. There was Callahan's trail. But Cal had stopped. Some one had gone to his shack—then he began to hurry.

He paused at the door. It was torn open. A ham-like hand dragged Peter, snow-shoes flopping off like sails, inward. Another ham-like hand smote Peter between the shoulder-blades. A bull-voice bellowed and rasped from a hairy-man-size chest:

"Callahan took me with him for company. We hit it up Sow-belly, came across the height into Hell Cat Valley. My foot got lots better, but it's still some bum. Callahan let me ride most o' the way. I got off here. We saw you weren't in. I thought you were on the trap-line, so I came in and Callahan and I made it up if he met you he wasn't to let on I was here, so you'd be s'prized——"

"Old Billo! I got plenty smokin' an' a handful o' real dried peaches for a puddin' tomorrow—Christmas. An' a deck o' cards. You'll stay till Spring, Billo."

"I'll keep the house, Pete——"

"An' I'll run the traps till your bum foot mends——"

"We'll talk an' talk——"

"Billy Kaboush, he's mushed into glory. Found him half-dead—mouth Siskiminzin. Me an' Cal hung him up below, more'n wolf-high. Say, I'll tell you 'bout that an' lots more. We'll talk an' talk——"

"We will, Pete," with another thwack on the shoulders, "you son-of-a-bench-legged-beagle's grandmother——"

"An' I'm rememberin' Billy Kaboush, Billo. I was headed for White Water to see you——"

"An' if you hadn't met him, you'd gone, got snowed in——"

"An' we'd not seen each other. You hived up here, with a bum foot. You might not got enough game to stick it out——"

"Billy Kaboush, he never done a good thing in his life, but in dyin' he turned you back to me, Petey, you son-of-a-bench——"

"Yes, an' if the wolves don't get him, we'll bury him, proper, in Spring——"

"An' while you're on the trap-line, I'll whittle him a dandy nice white-pine cross, an' letter it, too, for him. Blame his rotten heart, but he brought us together for Christmas, an' smokey-smokey an' puddin' an' talky-talk."

"Son-of-a-bench-legged-beagle's——"

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Lost Diggings

A Five Part Story — Conclusion

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Red Belts," "The Gate Through the Mountain," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

WHEN Shoshoni Hale, carrying a rifle and two hand-guns, came into the Boise Basin on the trail of his stolen mare he ran into one thing after another. The first was "Old Idaho," who was reported to have found the famous Lost Diggings, and who met him with no hospitality.

"Don't hanker to have no strange men around my granddarter," said the mountain-man, but Hale stayed long enough at the little cabin to meet Harriet Prescott, who looked like a boy in her buckskin clothes, before he went on down to Boise City.

A gold-mad town was Boise City, Idaho Territory, in this Summer of 'Sixty-five, and a town in which the ordinary processes of justice were reversed, for the power of the law was in the hands of evil men. Shoshoni learned this when he found his horse stalled in a livery stable as the property of Ferd Patterson, gambler, and went to court to try to get the mare back.

After a farcical examination Judge Curks was about to deny all his claims, apparently, when a small, dapper man appeared and said in a shrill voice—

"Just a minute, please."

Judge Curks squirmed and muttered—

"Always glad to hear from Ben Riply."

Ben Riply, of the Payette Committee, symbolized the silent justice that struck without warning, that left its mark—"XXX"—placarded on more than one dangling victim, and that would not hesitate to apply its corrective methods to those in high places. He got Shoshoni his horse and advised him to leave town.

Shoshoni needed no such advice. In the rear of the court-room he had seen a bearded face raised above the crowd and a hand pressed against the right cheek and shoved sharply upward. He broke into a cold sweat of fear.

From the town in which he had made enemies of Ferd Patterson and his gang Shoshoni Hale headed directly for Idaho City, where he had two friends, Jack Gorman and ex-Sheriff Pinkham. As he rode along he met Lucky Tom, an old prospector who had found rich diggings and whose life Hale had saved.

"You're welcome as whisky," said the old prospector, and they made camp together.

Next morning two mysterious shots from the bushes killed Lucky Tom. Before he died he signed over his claim to Hale.

"Man! Man!" sobbed Shoshoni. "I brought death to you. They took you for me."

Shoshoni buried Tom and rode on to Idaho City. He found the town gone crazy over diamonds. Governor Lyon had reported in the East that the Territory was rich with precious stones. No one had found any yet but that made no difference.

In the street Hale met his friend Pinkham.

"Look out for Patterson," warned the ex-sheriff. "What you tell me about Lucky Tom makes me think you better hole up in the hills for a while. Patterson's crowd may even try to use Tom's death against you."

That night a mob formed in the streets. Lucky Tom's body had been found. Remembering with a chill Pinkham's words, Hale asked a man whom the lynchers were after.

"Ferd Patterson for killing Pinkham a few hours ago!"

Hale did not wait to learn the outcome of this. He rode to the mountains with news for Old Idaho.

"Idaho City accuses you of passing counterfeit gold dust." Hale, Old Idaho and his granddaughter went to the Lost Gulch Lucky Tom had given Hale. With them they took an Indian friend of Shoshoni's—Black Cloud, who had lost his medicine.

Hale left them and went back to Idaho's cabin. Three men rode past him in the night, and one spoke words that sent a thrill of fear through Shoshoni—

"We'll soon be leading him over the rim of the basin."

He fired three shots at them but missed. He remembered the signal he had seen passed in the court room. The Danites were after Shoshoni Hale.

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Then he went to Idaho's cabin and destroyed evidence of the manufacture of the counterfeit dust. The half-demented old man had confessed that he was guilty.

This done, Shoshoni Hale rode on to Placerville, his most important errand still before him.

Disguised as a miner, in clothes procured from a Placerville store, Shoshoni took the streets as a mountain man, determined to locate his Danite enemies and meet them face to face. He learned from a bartender that two of them were Mushet and Burnham, friends of Patterson and Sheriff Bowen.

Shoshoni reached the hills safely, arriving at Old Idaho's cabin at sunrise a day later.

Black Cloud had not received the new medicine Miss Harry had promised him. It was now presented to him in the form of a bag of pebbles and a small compass. And the old chief's spirit became young again.

New enemies suddenly appeared. Governor Lyon and his partner, Fogus, passed slowly along the trail as if prospecting.

"Derned if the fools ain't hunting for diamonds!" cried Old Idaho.

This inflamed his imagination. The gold fever became a diamond craze. One morning Hale was awakened by an outcry—

"Grand-daddy's gone!"

No trace of him could be found by Shoshoni or the Indian. Black Cloud rode to Idaho City. He returned with the news that Old Idaho was in jail and the mob feeling was running high against him because of the counterfeit gold dust. He also carried a letter from Gorman. This letter contained the name of the third and last of Shoshoni's Danite enemies. It was Weber Joe.

Shoshoni destroyed the evidence against Old Idaho, substituting genuine gold dust for the counterfeit. Then he mounted his horse and rode grimly toward Placerville.

IN THE Idaho City jail Sheriff Bowman and his prisoner, Ferd Patterson, awaiting trial for the murder of Pinkham, put Old Idaho through the third degree.

"Where's your granddaughter? Where did Governor Lyon prospect for diamonds?"

When he found the old man would not talk the sheriff sent him back to his cell and suggested a plan.

"One of my men knows where the old fool has hidden the fake dust in his cabin. We'll fix it so that Ben Riply and his —— law-and-order crowd will take a searching-party out there and find it, and then when Idaho sees he's caught we'll promise to help him make his getaway if he'll tell about the girl and the diamonds."

"That's —— clever," approved the gambler.

The next day the citizens' committee, headed by Ben Riply, stood by as six bags of dust were dug up from beneath the floor of Old Idaho's cabin. The assayer hastened to apply his tests.

"The pure quill, gentlemen. Good as the wheat."

Shoshoni Hale had done his work in time. Old Idaho was released just as his granddaughter rode up to report that Shoshoni Hale had gone away and not come back, and that Black Cloud had dreamed he was in trouble.

IT WAS long after midnight that a man dressed as a Mexican entered the Gold Dust Saloon and started to pick a quarrel with two men seated at a table. A woman whispered to him:

"For ——'s sake, stop. That's Mushet and Burnham, the Danites!"

The man did not stop. He went over to the table of the Danites and talked a while. The three arose and turned their backs to one another.

"Go!"

The three men wheeled. Three guns spoke. Two men fell dead.

Another man appeared from a back room and faced the man dressed as a Mexican. Both fired. The man from the back room dropped to the floor, shot through and through.

As the man dressed as a Mexican leaped through a window and rode away he heard above the screams of the dance-hall girls the bar-keep's voice—

"Shoshoni Hale's come back and murdered the Danites—Mushet, Burnham and Weber Joe!"

Back to Lost Gulch rode Hale, his father revenged, his fear wiped out. But he found only Black Cloud. Little Harry and Idaho had gone.

From the Danites Hale had learned that Judge Curks could clear him of the charge of murdering Lucky Tom.

CHAPTER XII

SHOSHONI COMES AND GOES

MISS HARRY had washed the supper dishes and had gone to her room to get the effect of the home-made white dress by studying the three-quarters reflection in the window. She made her imagination do service where the small panes broke joints. Her heart had told her Hale must come, that he could not drop out of her life and leave the scheme of things incomplete. When she stepped back to the living-room he was there, standing just inside the door, rifle in hand and the heavy belt-guns sagging in their holsters.

"Howdy, Miss Harry. Howdy, Idaho," he greeted.

Old Idaho did not rise from his chair before the fire-place but grunted something that may have been an expression of welcome. The girl advanced, her eyes shining, and gave him her hand. It was the first time he had seen her dressed as a woman, and as he retained her brown hand he stared in perplexity.

"Then you don't like it, Shoshoni," she said, withdrawing her hand and pushing forward a chair.

"I like it a heap," he slowly replied, his gaze wandering from the toes of her civilized foot-gear to the mass of curls gathered in a whorl at the top of the small head.

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"But it makes you different. Seems like I must git acquainted with a new girl. Somehow you look older—bigger, if anything."

"Perhaps I'm growing," she suggested with a happy little laugh. "Or it may be the heels on the shoes. I don't like 'em. But ain't you taking a risk in coming here? And where's Pinaquana?"

"No partic'lar risk. Pinaquana's outside, back a bit from the river. She won't come till I whistle."

"You oughter know better'n to come here, Shoshoni," grumbled Old Idaho. "I've just had the —— of a time satisfying them fools at Idaho City that I'm an honest man. It might look bad if you was seen dropping in here."

"Meaning it would look bad for Shoshoni, Hale," quickly supplemented the girl. "There's never been any question about Shoshoni's honesty."

She did not realize she was making any comparison; but the old man winced. Hale was embarrassed. The girl's welcome was all that he had expected, but Idaho had disappointed him.

"I knew everything was all right with you, Idaho. I watched the cabin lights last night till I made sure you and Miss Harry were here and alone."

He hesitated and pulled a bag from his blouse and tossed it on the table, saying:

"I can't bring myself to work much, the gulch seems so lonely. But there's your half of what I've panned out."

With a muttered exclamation Old Idaho dragged his chair to the table and fondled the bag. Lifting his head he hoarsely said—

"So you've been in the gulch ag'in."

"Of course. I'm hiding there."

Old Idaho weighed the bag in one trembling hand and then secreted it in the big chest. Straightening, he focused his eyes on Hale, and there was suspicion in his steady stare. He said:

"It's neighborly of you to bother to work the diggings, even if you're well paid. If it wasn't for Harry I'd be back there and doing it all myself."

"Don't forget it's Shoshoni's gulch," said the girl with an uneasy little laugh.

"You quit that sort of talk," commanded Idaho, his beard bristling as the lean under jaw crept aggressively forward. "I ain't forgitting as there ain't nothing to forgit. I found that gulch in 'Forty-five. Already one man has had the run of it and taken out oceans of gold and would be doing the same now if he hadn't been cut off."

He emphasized the last with a peculiar look at Hale.

"I'm staying there only long enough to git in touch with Black Cloud. It won't be long. He's up north."

"He told me when he left the gulch that he was going to make smokes," the girl said. "I don't know what he meant."

"Going to have a talk with his friends. Talk by smoke signals," explained Hale. Then to Old Idaho: "You'd better keep clear of the gulch for a while. Men in town will be dogging you to see where you git your dust. If it'll make you feel any better I won't pan out any more."

"My goodness! One would think you was a beggar to hear you talk, and that the gulch was our property," cried the girl.

"Harry, you keep shet. It's this way, Hale; so long as you're going to be there for a bit you might as well do a little work. As to sharing up, why, there's many who'd reckon eighteen dollars a day would be fine wages. Miners are satisfied to work for that in other places. But when it comes to splitting half 'n' half—why, great guns! What if you should uncover a thick vein, say, a foot thick of almost pure gold? Perhaps not more'n ten minutes' work. Would you expect to take half of that?"

"I'd expect it all to go to Miss Harry," countered Hale before the girl could speak.

Old Idaho bounced from his chair and whispered:

"You ain't uncovered a vein already, have you? You ain't fired off that blast I was fixing when you come mixing in and took the powder away? Oh, my soul! If that blast has been set off——"

"It hasn't!" sternly interrupted Hale. "The man who fires that blast will never tell about it. It will pull the cliff down on top of him. I won't talk about gold-dust any more tonight. Miss Harry, I reckon I'll go outside for a spell. If by any chance you'd like to step out——"

He was diffident in his invitation, but the girl did not hesitate. Hale advised:

"Better throw something over that amazing pretty white dress. It shows up clear."

"I don't like the notion of my girl having to hide when she talks with a man. If he's in danger he oughter clear out and not

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be seeking young women's company," spoke up Old Idaho.

"Your medicine's strong. That's a good talk," admitted Hale. "I didn't ought to call. But there wasn't any risk tonight—I've scouted up and down to make sure there's no one hanging round—and there was the dust."

"I only spoke in a wide way, Shoshoni," hastily declared Idaho. "So long as no one was following you, it's all right. And I'm glad of the dust. But a young man can't be too careful of the girl he's sitting up."

"No man's sitting me up, grandfather," sharply corrected the girl. "Can't a man friend stop and talk with me without such foolishness being said? Hasn't Jack Gorman talked with me?"

Hale felt the arrow of jealousy. The old man testily answered—

"Gorman's talked with you, but he ain't made a special trip at night to do it."

"I don't want to do anything that'll make it disagreeable for you, Miss Harry," earnestly assured Hale. "Not being used to women-folks, I mayn't be as quick as some in knowing just what's perlite and proper."

"Standing in front of that candle is more dangerous than standing outside in the dark. And I'll remind you mighty sudden when you ain't polite and proper. Come along!"

The savagery of her voice would have told the sophisticated that such warm championship could not be far removed from a more endearing sentiment. Hale read in it the evidence of her displeasure.

As she snatched a long cloak from a peg and passed outside he followed and began—

"I want you to know, Miss Harry, that I wouldn't for the world——"

"Shoshoni Hale, you'll make me ugly as an ugly cat. If any one comes you'll have to shoot your way out. If you're afraid for yourself you'd better slope now. But stop worrying about me."

"I don't reckon you believe I'm scared for myself," he stiffly replied. "I was thinking about your granddad's words—that a man in danger ain't got any call to be hunting young women's company."

"You're about as sociable to talk to as a blind pinto," she sighed. "See here: what about your killing three men in Idaho City?"

"It ain't a pretty thing to tell a young woman. Who told you?"

"Grandfather. Three men in one night! That is very terrible."

He knew Old Idaho had told her nothing about the background of the triple killing; nor did he feel that he could explain so long as the cloud hung over him. He contented himself with gloomily reminding her—

"Not one of 'em would be less dead if he was the only one I potted."

"I'm not blaming you, Shoshoni. I know it must be all right. Only it sounded awful brutal when granddaddy told me. Three men, one right after another!"

"But Mushet and Burnham went out practically together. I was shooting fast," he anxiously explained. As an afterthought he asked, "How much did Idaho tell you?"

"Said you left the gulch, went to Idaho City, shot three men to death in a saloon, and that you're being hunted for it with a price on your head. I know you wouldn't do such a thing to be bloodthirsty."

"Much obliged. That's all he said?"

"All? Shoshoni! You don't mean there's any more?"

"Just the three."

And the misery returned to his heart. The old man had said nothing to exculpate him in any degree. To interpose a defense while he was remaining in hiding was an impossible thing for him to do. If he desired, he believed he could impose on her credulity in almost any matter. She wanted to believe him. What he wanted was her implicit faith in him until explanations could establish all the facts.

"Let's not talk about it any more," he said.

"But where will it end?" she asked.

"There's one more matter to clear up. Then I reckon I'll be free to come and go."

"But no more killings?"

"Not less some one jumps me. I told you about my father being killed. Those men were his murderers."

"They were the shadows?" she whispered.

He nodded.

"Always at my heels. Ever since I was a boy."

Innate shrewdness had warned him it would be impossible to take a woman into half a confidence and leave her satisfied. If the truth of how Lucky Tom was murdered could ever be proved then he could

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explain from the beginning. Then he could say all the things his tongue would now find it so difficult to utter, and which his heart was so impatient should be told. Speaking as he would to a man, he bruskly said:

"Well, let it go at that. I reckon the mare's wondering why I don't come."

She recalled his words when he rode away from the gulch, when he had said he had stayed there for the sake of being near her. That brief confession had remained warm in her memory, and now it gave a hurt to her heart that he should be willing to ride into the night and leave nothing but commonplaces for her to think about. She shyly asked—

"Why do you stay in the gulch?"

Instead of the hoped-for answer he frankly replied—

"It's the safest hiding-place till the Indian shows up."

"I'm glad you're safe," she said, turning back to the cabin.

"Miss Harry," he anxiously called after her, "I'd give something handsome if I could talk plain to you."

Her cheek burned with shame as she remembered when she had been impelled, without fully understanding the driving-power of her impulse, to lead him into some expression of sentiment. He had ignored that chance and thereby had caused her to fear she had been unmaidenly. She would blaze no more trails for him to turn his back upon.

"Don't you worry any about that, Shoshoni," she coolly advised him. "But I've had enough of skulking and hiding to last me a life time." Then she was at the door and faintly calling a "good night" over her shoulder.

He moodily returned to the mare, his high hopes as low as the grayish-white dust under his feet.

"I'm a fool to hang around her," he bitterly confided to the darkness. "It ain't fair to her so long as I can't talk till I can tell everything. No man has a right to win a woman's love and then make her unhappy by telling her he's liable to be cashed in any minute. She feels things ain't as they ought to be. And she's right, so long as that reward holds good for my capture. Wish Black Cloud would hurry up and come. My medicine's no good. If his ain't got the proper strength I reckon it's about the end of Shoshoni Hale. Make or break. But it ain't fair to her. I mustn't come here any more till my slate's washed clean."

BUT like many another resolve, where a woman is concerned, he came again and again. On each visit, always paid at night, he handed over a bag of dust for Old Idaho's edification and worry; joy over possession, fear that there was much he was losing. When Hale and the girl were alone she was irritated to the edge of anger at his behavior. He seemed anxious to be with her, but each visit found him more noncommittal. She became enraged at herself for meekly following him aside into the darkness to listen to his awkward efforts to say conventional things.

One day Jack Gorman rode up to the cabin, and she found his warm, boyish manner to be a great improvement over Hale's somber mood. Gorman joked her grandfather into high spirits. He talked nonsense to her until her ears burned. Here was a man who understood youth, who understood her heart even when she herself was puzzled. She was glad he came. He chased the shadows from her soul and made her laugh.

He was older than Hale, but he seemed to be much younger. There was too much mystery surrounding Hale. He lived on the edge of tragedies. Why did he stick to the name of Hale when his real name was Harris? Not that she imagined the reason was in the least tainted with dishonor. But it built up another enigma. It even hinted at fear. If fear, why didn't he meet it and rout it? He carried two hand-guns and a rifle; his weapons evidenced his expectation to encounter violence.

Yet it was impossible for her to suspect him of even spasmodic cowardice. The gruesome fight in the saloon prohibited any such judgment. She questioned Gorman about the fight and he said:

"That's for Shoshoni to tell. I can't meddle in his affairs except to lend him a hand when it comes to a show-down. He fought against big odds. He gave the skunks chances that I'd never have given."

"The sheriff is still after him?"

"You bet he is, Miss Harry. And that vermin of a Ferd Patterson still lords it over the whole jail and walks round town with

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one deputy tagging him. No rush and hurry to set justice working on that case. Shoshoni Hale is a mighty fine man. Better even than you imagine."

He was thinking of the gold dust Hale had substituted for the bogus dust. And she would never know the truth of that affair.

Had he spoken slightingly of Hale she would have hotly resented it. His praise, however, centered her thoughts on the things Hale had left unsaid.

"I don't spend much time thinking about Shoshoni's good qualities," she said. "He's been good to us by taking us to a place where granddaddy could hide until he could show how silly the charge against him was. But Shoshoni was going there to hide, and his reason for hiding is stronger than ours ever was. There wasn't any need of our going. I didn't want to go. It made it seem like granddaddy was guilty. But that's all over."

Gorman pondered over her speech with many shrewd glances at her composed face. Surely this was no love-smitten maid, he kept telling himself; and the great hope entered his heart. They were outdoors, seated on the log that served as a door-step. Old Idaho was at the table inside, checking up his bags of dust and quite buried beneath his calculations.

Gorman hesitated and made several false starts, and at last blurted out—

"Miss Harry, I want to ask a personal question."

She smiled at his gravity and wondered what refreshing bit of nonsense he was about to release. She nodded an invitation for him to proceed. She was quite delighted to observe he was embarrassed. It was the first time she had found him lacking in assurance.

"Here goes!" he desperately warned. "Are you Shoshoni Hale's girl?"

She was silent so long he feared he had deeply displeased her. When she spoke her voice was scarcely audible, and she replied:

"That *is* a personal question. No wonder you found it hard to ask that."

"It had to be asked," he retorted. "All the cards on the table, face up. Then we know where we are at. Shoshoni's my friend. I wouldn't cut into his game to save my life. It simply had to be asked."

"Up to now you've been reckoning I was his girl?" she whispered.

"Had to. Any man would be a fool not to make a play for you. Even Ferd Patterson couldn't help doing it. Why, an honest man is simply bound to do it, if he thinks you're not bespoke."

"Shoshoni Hale never, as you put it, made a play for me. I'm not his girl."

He remained quiet for half a minute, then told her:

"Honest, I almost feel sorry for old Shoshoni. But some one always loses. Miss Harry, I'm sitting in to win. I feel mighty glad for Jack Gorman. When I find out I'm a loser I'll feel bad."

"Time you was riding back, Mister Jack Gorman," she muttered, rising and smoothing out her gown. "I ain't any man's girl."

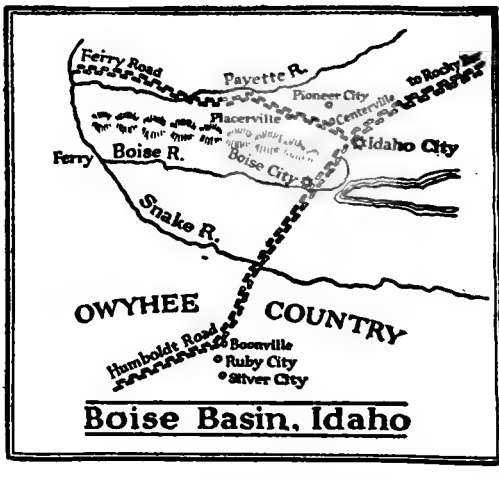
"Anyway, I'm free to talk. There's no reason why I shouldn't talk once," he begged.

"I'm not hankering to listen just now. You trot back home."

"I'm coming again, Miss Harry. I'm coming mighty soon. I'm coming, and you're going to hear the talk I fetch along."

"Good-by."

Before he could speak further she was in the living-room and was arousing her grandfather from his dreaming. Gorman waved



Boise Basin, Idaho

his hand and called out to Old Idaho and secured his horse.

"Put up the dust, granddaddy," she coaxed. "Come outdoors and walk around."

He knitted his brows fretfully and complained: "I'll put up the dust, but I'd feel better if there was more of it to put away. Hale's taking too much."

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't say such things."

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"I don't mean he's taking more'n he says. But fifty per cent. of what he picks up is too much. He's welcome to the gulch to hide in. I ain't making any fuss over that. Yet there's the risk he'll be followed and the diggings filled up with strangers. I ain't fussing if he helps himself to a fair amount. But when he keeps holding back bag after bag, each one as big as these he fetches here— Good Lord! I don't even know how he weighs it. Mebbe he fills two and makes a guess. How do I know that I ain't gitting a bag each time that's a little bit smaller'n t'other? Can't you see, Harry, he's making as much out of it as I be?"

She could have wept at hearing such base suspicions, but neither words nor weeping would dislodge the old man's obsession. Her grandfather had changed much and for the worse ever since the investigating committee had exonerated him of passing counterfeit dust. She had watched the spirit of avarice grow like the shadows consuming the ridge at twilight. The gulch was his mania. It was no longer advisable to remind him he had no claim on the hidden diggings. He had grown to believe that no one could have a color of a right to them besides himself and the girl. Miss Harry had hoped the mood would pass, but daily she saw him sinking deeper into the slough of greed.

"You know Hale's an honest man," she quietly said.

"Honest?" he sneered, and then raised a cackling laugh. "Let me tell you an old truth, Harry: no man can know his own honesty till he's had two experiences—with gold, and with a woman. Hale was honest as a road-builder. He was honest as a hunter in the mountains. As a pard of Injuns he was honest. But who can say he's honest with gold? How do we know he'd be honest with a woman?"

"Oh, that's too cruel!"

She turned away and fought back the tears.

"You talk like a baby! You don't know the world. You don't know nothing about men. Hale's walking over a gold mine each day. How many men in Idaho territory that could do that and not try to hog it all? Don't men lie, steal and murder for gold? Ain't it human natur' for a man to help himself out of lost diggings when he'd never think of helping himself out of a man's pocket?"

"But it's not true, and I know it. And being honest with a woman!"

"Reckon I can't talk about that with you." He was beginning to feel uncomfortable. "If your ma had lived she'd 'a' told you things as a matter of course. Many men that's dishonest in their hearts will go straight in every-day life just because of their pride. But when it comes to gold and women no man can tell how he'll act; but if he's a wise man he'll know that no amount of pride will keep him straight. Nothing but bedrock honesty will do that. Hale's coming here quite reg'lar. What's he talk to you about, Honey?"

"Oh, nothing in particular."

"Tried to make any fool love to my girl?"

"No!" She said it so fiercely that the old man blinked his eyes.

"That's to his credit," he conceded. "He ain't in position to talk love to no woman. No man is who's charged with murder."

"It was in self-defense!"

"The three fellers in Idaho City. Probably. But he went gunning for them."

"They'd been chasing him for years. They murdered his father. Jack Gorman says he gave them an even chance when he ought to have shot them down like dogs."

"Mebbe he was within his right. But I was thinking of Lucky Tom."

"Why, you can't believe that stuff!" she cried. "He was the miner's friend. Shoshoni Hale may be a fool in some things, but he's no murderer."

They talked no more for many minutes. The girl wallowed in misery, unable to wade out; the old man slowly reverted to that which tortured him daily—Hale's continued presence in the gulch. As he sat there, his hands gripping the edge of the table and wondering how much longer Hale would remain at the diggings, he found himself dwelling on a new and fearful possibility. With a groan he raised both hands and brought them down on the table.

"Granddaddy! Are you sick?" she gasped, running to him and passing an arm over his shoulder.

"Sick at heart!" he groaned. And he threw several bags of dust on the floor behind the chest as if they contained so much dirt. "It's all a game! What a fool I've been not to guess it before! What a poor old fool!"

"You lie down and let me get——"

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"Don't talk stuff. I won't be babied. I want my rights. By Godfrey, I'll have 'em!"

Again his two gnarled hands made the table jump.

Wide-eyed with fear, she drew back and watched him. She believed his reason had suddenly collapsed. Her terror diminished when he calmly rose and picked up the bags and carefully locked them in the chest. Then he came back to her and in a low, level voice stated:

"Hale's been finding di'mon's on my diggings. He's been pouching di'mon's and turning over some measly dust to keep me quiet. He fetches me a bag of dust. Ho, ho!" His senile laughter was horrible to hear; it was explosive with wrath and there was insanity behind it. "In ——'s mercy why shouldn't he fetch dust, worth eighteen dollars an ounce, so long as he can pouch di'mon's, worth a thousand dollars apiece even for the teeny ones? Harry, sure as the sun crawls over Sawtooth Range tomorrow morning that's what Shoshoni Hale's up to."

She burst into passionate weeping. The old man paced the floor. Between her sobs she managed to say:

"How he'd be with a woman—I don't know. But with gold—diamonds—I'm sure he's honest."

Her tears continued until Old Idaho halted and stared down on her shaking shoulders with a glimmer of concern in his eyes.

"There, there. Don't cry any more, Harry. We won't talk about it any more. I'll try to think as you think."

She slept poorly that night, tormented by fragments of evil dreams. She was stealing into the gulch when the first thunderstorm succeeded in crossing the river and invading the range below. By the flashing of the lightning she saw Hale picking up huge diamonds and hiding them. When the lightning ceased its play the light from the stones illumined the scene. Then she saw him walking with women, his arms over their shoulders, only these women had no faces.

In the last dream he was alone with Pinaquana, with hand-guns and rifle, and he had halted the mare on the top of a low hill with the grass reaching above his stirrups. He sensed danger and was staring about him, but was unable to discover the circle of men creeping upward through the tall grass. The circle contracted until they were almost upon him. She tried to cry out a warning, and the effort awoke her. The early sun was streaming through the cheap curtains. In the living-room Old Idaho was making the coffee. She rose and put on her boy's clothes.

She was immensely relieved to find her grandfather was interested in his gardens this morning. For several days he had neglected them. He worked over the vegetables until midday, and more than once called to her to come and admire their growth. In the afternoon a thunderstorm was loosed by the mountains, only, unlike the one in her dream, it was burned up before reaching the plains.

Old Idaho watched the defeat of the routed storm and remarked:

"Pretty soon it'll be pounding down on this cabin. How'd you like to spend the Winter in Idaho City?"

"I'd love it!"

He smiled and nodded his white head and promised:

"It's more'n half likely that we can It's too danged lonesome here in the Win ter. And nothing to do. They hav dances and parties at Idaho City, just th rinktums a girl likes. Then there's th sliding clubs for them that's fond of out doors; and that's where you'd fit in fine Harry. Placerville Champion Sliding Clu has never got over the hiding Idaho Cit give it last year. Placerville challenge and put up twenty-five hundred dollars a her share of the stake. She was bankin on her cutter, *Flying Cloud*, taking the bes out of three. The slide was from the top Granite Street to Wolf Creek, each cutt carrying four men. Both towns bet then selves empty, and derned if Idaho City *Wide West* didn't carry off the mone I reckon there was some dancing and son parties and dinners after that! Lordy, b them was gay times!"

"I'd love that," she murmured.

"I reckon you would. Then there's t *French Frigate*, that carries twenty me and the fastest thing on runners in t basin. Some of the boys 'low they c build one to beat her. And my little g will shine there, and be happy, too."

"I'm happy when you're happy," s told him.

Thus despite the disagreeable night t

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girl found the day filled with much that pleased her. Her grandfather was more as he had been when they first came to the valley. In truth, she could not recall a time when he was so willing to talk with her, let alone to discuss amusements and the things which would engage her fancy. Not once during the day did he go to the chest and examine his gold, although he did say he should take it to Idaho City for safekeeping within a day or so.

Until dark he worked outdoors and she helped him. After supper he made no move to take out the bags of dust, but remained content to smoke his pipe before the blazing fire-place. Now he had nothing to say; and yet the girl was happy, for his face was benevolent and placid. The quiet of the room was broken by a low rap on the door, and Shoshoni Hale again stood inside the threshold.

HE GREETED the two with more than usual warmth. There was a sparkle of exultation in his gray-green eyes as, according to his custom, he advanced to the table and threw down a bag of dust. But contrary to his habit Old Idaho did not seize the bag and greedily estimate its weight. He waved his pipe in friendly welcome and said:

"Take a chair, Shoshoni. Put the bag away, little girl. How's everything at the gulch?"

"Just the same. Deadly dull. I think I shall be pulling out pretty soon."

"Sho! You don't say. Going up into the mountains, mebbe? Going to den up for the Winter?"

"I'm in hopes to be free to go where I wish. How are you, Miss Harry?"

"Fine, Shoshoni. Your friend Jack Gorman called the other day. I like him."

"Every one likes him who knows him," was the ready response.

"Nothing new at the gulch? No di'mon's yet?"

The old man chuckled as he put the question, and Hale grinned to show he appreciated the joke. Then he became thoughtful and fumbled in his pockets.

"If you hadn't spoke of diamonds I'd plumb forgot it," he said. "And I packed it all the way here for Miss Harry. It's the nearest to a diamond we'll ever see in the gulch. It's pretty." He handed over a quartz crystal, small and as transparent as glass.

Before the girl could take it Old Idaho's long arm shot forward and his fingers had snatched it from Hale's hand. With a little cry of delight he held it up to the light and marveled at its transparency and the reflection of the candle's gleam along the polished planes.

"What is it?" he whispered.

"Not worth two bits, Idaho. Only a little quartz crystal. Surely you've seen many of 'em."

"I never see nothing like it afore," hoarsely muttered Idaho. "It's smooth and clear's a di'mon', I reckon."

"Diamonds are entirely different, Idaho," said Hale. "It's worthless except as a keepsake."

"I see," mumbled the old man, continuing to turn the crystal over between his fingers. "It's master pretty."

"I'm much obliged, Shoshoni," said Miss Harry.

"It's just pretty to look at. Thought you'd like to have it because it comes from the gulch. Probably lots more of 'em there. Probably some big ones. Well, I must be going. Got some business to 'tend to." He glanced at the girl and then toward the door.

She followed him outside and asked—

"So you're busy tonight?"

He explained:

"I risked an early start to git a good look at the northern sky-line. And I caught two smokes in the hills north of here. That means Black Cloud is back and wants to talk to me. I must make his camp and be back at the gulch, or within easy striking distance of it, before sun-up."

"And you're quitting the gulch, you say?"

"Very soon now. If the Indian's medicine is strong enough I won't have to stay in hiding much longer."

"You've been making new plans, I'd say."

"Better say I'm thinking of trying a plan that's been stewing inside my head for quite a spell. . . . How it'll work depends on luck . . . and Black Cloud. Do you know, Miss Harry, I've been waiting to git some things straightened out so's I could have a talk with you."

She recalled her experience in the gulch. She remembered each separate visit to the

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cabin, and his strange backwardness to approach the subject she had so much at heart. And she found herself remembering what her grandfather had said about men never knowing how honest they were until encountering gold and women. She felt bitter toward herself, and bitter toward him, and the darkness gave her courage, and she answered—

"Jack Gorman's more of a talker than you are."

"He still comes here, I reckon."

"He's been here, yes."

His voice sounded odd as he next said: "Jack's a good fellow. I reckon it's easy for him to talk."

"Seems to come natural to him."

He coughed and hemmed, and said:

"Well, I've got a long ride. Some day I can talk."

He was moving away from her; and, desperate that she had failed to arouse any emotion in him, she called after him—

"Jack was down here t'other day and asked me a question."

The padding of his moccasins ceased; then his tall figure was standing close beside her. She fell to trembling and feared he would touch her arm and discover her agitation. He quietly asked—

"I s'pose you answered that question?"

His calmness, his readiness to stand apart, his failure to express any concern, all had their part in arousing her resentment. She must either go on, or else give way to weeping. So she boldly told him:

"Yes, I answered him. He asked if I was your girl and I told him I wasn't."

She scarcely recognized his voice when he said:

"Jack's a good man. Honest. Square. You're lucky to git a man like him. I'm wishing you both—best of luck—good health—nothing but happiness. Wind's sharp tonight. You'll be gitting a chill."

He whistled shrilly on his fingers and was at once answered by faint hoof-beats.

"Jack's your friend. He wanted to know——"

"Of course. Jack's square. He's lucky. There ain't only so many face-cards in a deck."

Nearer came the pounding hoofs to trample on her heart by carrying him away. She tried to speak; but her mind was paralyzed, her tongue was paralyzed. She could not shake off the stupor which had seized upon her. Only one sense seemed active; she heard the flying hoofs sweeping down upon them. Then the intelligent animal was between them. With scarcely a pause the mare swept on to pass through the light streaming from the cabin window, and not until then did the girl realize that Hale had mounted and was riding away.

"Shoshoni!" she whispered, although she meant to scream. "Wait!"

But the scuffling hoofs smothered the low appeal; and Shoshoni Hale had disappeared in the darkness.

"He'll come again! He'll come again!" she savagely told herself as she stood with her hands clenched and tilted her head to follow the receding tattoo of the swift-flying hoofs. "Oh, God! He must come again. Just once more!" she sobbed as she turned toward the cabin.

Old Idaho still sat before the fire, holding the crystal in his hand. He turned his head as she entered and frowned slightly as she closed the door.

"Ain't Shoshoni coming in?"

"No. I reckon it's his good-by visit," she answered, turning away and gritting her teeth to force back the sobs.

"His good-by visit!" dully repeated Old Idaho. "And I wanted to speak to him. Well, we'll hope he'll come again."

"He goes back to the gulch, but he won't come here again. I'm very tired. Good night."

She kissed him, and his eyes, blinded by the worthless crystal, noted nothing of her great sorrow. When she went to her room he remained before the fire, the crystal between thumb and finger, his head bent forward as if to watch visions in the coals. And as he stared his eyes lighted and he smiled at some pleasant thought.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEDICINE OF BLACK CLOUD

SHOSHONI HALE was a prisoner in the jail charged with the murder of Lucky Tom. The news was given out before sunrise, and the night resorts boiled over and filled the streets. He had been captured the day before within a few miles of the Prescott cabin. Few if any in the excited throngs felt the need of rest as the new day opened. The arrest of Hale was entirely unexpected. It was supposed he

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had taken refuge in the mountains. Those who had proclaimed Sheriff Bowen as a useless cog in the law's machinery began to wonder if the man had not been too hastily judged. To lay Hale by the heels was a noteworthy achievement for any officer to score. It was even more astounding that the man had been taken alive.

As if the taking of Hale were not enough to key Idaho City up to great mental agitation there was added the scare of an Indian uprising. In the drinking-places it was heatedly declared to be a fact that Hale's Indians were coming to sack the town and rescue him. The more sober-minded citizens, on being aroused from sleep, hurried forth and gravely investigated the story. Their examination of the evidence resulted in a denial of the rumor.

There was no band of Indians approaching Pioneer City and Placerville with hostile intent and with the ultimate purpose of attacking Centerville and Idaho City. After the denial had been issued several newcomers, impeccable witnesses, distressed the citizens' committee by declaring the presence of the red men was no fantasy. The boss of a saw-mill on the outskirts of Placerville came in and insisted he had seen and counted twoscore warriors, mounted and armed, near his mill.

For a while the proximity of the Indians diverted attention from the prisoner in the jail. Scouts were sent out and arrangements made to send aid to the sister towns in event of an attack. It was the common belief in Idaho City that the dark hour had arrived when the Nez Perces and Shoshoni were uniting with the Blackfeet over the mountains to carry the pipe against all whites in the territory and the Beaver Head country.

The scouts returned quickly, having met messengers from Placerville. The latter came to report that some forty Indians had approached close to the town but had departed without firing a shot. Public interest promptly centered on the jail. Buena Vista Bar emptied itself into the town. It was known that the neighboring towns were sending large delegations to witness the disposition of Hale.

Not until noon did Sheriff Bowen show himself on the street, and not then until the citizen's committee had sent word for him to explain how the capture had been effected. He met representatives of the committee in the Craft & Vantine store. He had been convinced, he explained, that Hale was hiding somewhere along the Payette River road despite all reports that the man had fled north. He had sent his deputies into the suspected region frequently and at last one of them had caught a glimpse of Hale riding toward the hills south of the river.

"The rest was easy," he added. "I took my men and went down there, and Shoshoni Hale rode right into our arms. For once he was off his guard. You never saw such a surprized man. Show fight? Hardly, with our guns covering him. When he realized the game was up he didn't want to make trouble. Never see a man lose his sand and go to pieces as he did. I took his big guns from him and he didn't make a yip. Now what you fellows going to do about it? Does the law get a chance to try him or will you string him up? I'm going to do my duty, but I don't hanker to kill off any townspeople in defending him. He's a bad one."

"You'll know when the committee takes any action," Vantine told him. "And when it does you step aside. We're waiting now for Ben Riply. He helped us organize, and we want to hear what he has to say. There's talk about the town toughs lynching Hale offhand. We don't want anything of that sort."

"I'm to fight off one mob, but step aside for the other," snarled Bowen. "If you want any street mob stopped you can be on hand to help. I'll swear you all in as special deputies. As for Riply, he hasn't been seen since yesterday morning. In due time the law will dispose of Shoshoni Hale's case."

"So's Christmas coming," jeered Vantine. "The law's taking lots of time in disposing of Patterson's case, we notice. The grand jury hasn't reported on it yet. If we'd been organized when Pinkham was murdered Patterson's room at the jail would be empty long before this. But we're keeping hands off just to see if the law will work."

"I don't have nothing to do with indicting and trying prisoners," Bowen uneasily reminded him. "It's my job to catch 'em. A man's wanted: I go and nail him. Now that thousand dollars your committee told me to offer. Seems if it will have to be split up between me and my boys."

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"You're welcome to the reward," Vantine shortly told him. "But after this we'll expect you to catch a few men before any reward is offered. Seen anything of Jack Gorman this morning?"

"Nary hair nor hide. Been looking for him to call at the jail to see Hale. They're friends. Well, I must be going back. Don't want any mob snaking Hale out and stretching him."

In returning, however, he took time to step into the Gold Dust Saloon and glance over the crowd. He was besieged with queries but held his head high and was deaf to them. He forced his way to the gambling-hall, stale with the night's dissipation. It was practically empty. One of the women of the place, haggard and with the contours of the dead showing in her face under the merciless sunlight, suspended a game of solitaire to ask listlessly for the news.

"Nothing new. They ain't hung Hale yet."

"He's a man," she muttered. "I seen him kill those——"

"You'll probably have the pleasure of seeing him hang for killing an innocent miner," he sternly replied. She smiled knowingly, then grew afraid as his gaze menaced her. "I'm looking for Judge Curks. Been in here today?"

"No. That little runt, Riply, came in here yesterday and talked with Curks, and they went out together. He ain't been here since."

The sheriff departed, much puzzled over the disappearance of his Boise City friend. Curks was not given to roaming. If not at his room he could always be found at the Gold Dust Saloon. Nor would he return to Boise City until he had profited by learning Old Idaho's secret. Bowen elbowed his way through the groups on the street and repeatedly refused to pause and enlighten the curious. He smiled grimly when Three-Spot, the town's leading drunkard, began yelling—

"Hang Hale!"

"'Long about this evening," the sheriff told himself. "Not enough liquor behind 'em yet to make 'em real ugly. They'll have to organize and find out who's their leaders."

At the jail he found Patterson pacing the living-room, his eyes glittering with triumph. At every turn he halted before the table to gloat over Hale's two Colt revolvers. Picking up one of the guns and playing with it, he told Bowen—

"I want to go down to see him."

"I don't want you to. Put that gun down, Ferd. Don't do things to attract attention to you. Vantine was saying this morning that the law is too slow in hanging you. You keep away from Hale, or you'll find yourself hooked up with him when they rush the jail. I don't think you'd be safe overnight if Jack Gorman and Ben Riply could be found, especially Riply."

"I don't like your talk, Bowen," said Patterson. "You're too free in saying how I may be hung. If they turn me off you'll get yours inside of the next sixty minutes I've arranged for that. So, no games with me. Here's another thing; you're too —— sly about how you caught Hale. How was the trick turned?"

"Laid for him. Took him by surprize. Threw a gun on him——"

"Bah! You couldn't catch a crippled ox. How did you know where to find him and when to go after him?"

"I've told you all there is," was the sullen answer. "You don't talk like a friend. And this will be a mob-night. As for having some of the gang lay for me that language makes bad friends. They may promise you certain things, but if you're turned off they won't be keen to even up. No pay to be had from a dead man. I've warned you for your own good to keep quiet, keep back out of sight. Let folk forget you a bit. If you don't, and if they do come, I can't save your neck. That's flat."

"We mustn't quarrel," surrendered Patterson. "I know you're all right, Bowen. I was joking about having any one pot you. Get word to the boys to turn the trick. If Gorman gets back he'll try to stop it. Riply will be for the hanging, but he'll want it done by the new committee. Do you know where Hale's been hiding?"

"No. He was riding near the river when I caught him."

"He must be made to tell. He's the one who replaced Old Idaho's bogus dust with gold. The old man was swept off his feet to have the assayer call it good. To do this trick Hale had to be near the cabin. He had to have rich diggings. He got the gold from Lucky Tom's diggings. Tell him you'll let him skip if he'll tell."

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"I've been at him and at him all the morning," growled the sheriff. "I've told him he'll surely hang tonight unless he gets loose. I've promised to turn him loose if he'll tell. But he acts like a man that's drunk. Just sits and mopes and stares at the floor."

"But he must talk! Send for Curks. He's a master-hand to worm things from a man."

"Curks is off the map. Can't find him anywhere. Funny, too; for he's sure to hear of Hale's capture."

"Curks, Riply, and Gorman! It's queer. It's more'n that. It's crooked," muttered the gambler.

He picked up a deck of cards and dealt them face up in several piles. With a deep breath of relief he cried:

"My card comes up in the lucky pile again. To —— with your mob! I believe in my luck. The cards say I won't swing. I'm through being scared."

The entrance of a deputy halted the conversation. The man grinned and informed them—

"Pert young gal in boy's clothes mortal keen to see Shoshoni Hale."

The sheriff and Patterson exchanged swift glances. It was Patterson who gave the order, directing—

"At the end of five minutes send her in here."

The sheriff indorsed this with a nod and, after the man had withdrawn, was reminded by the gambler:

"The girl knows about the diggings. She can be made to tell."

"I think Old Idaho knows about 'em," said Bowen, and he turned aside to hide a slight smile.

Patterson darted a murderous look at him, then smoothed out his features and said:

"Perhaps so. But you skip out before the girl comes in. I'll put it to her plain—she must tell or see Hale swing."

"She'll ask to see Hale first. He'll tell her to keep shut."

"No one must see Hale except you and Curks. We'll play on the girl's fears. Then we'll play on Hale's fears for the girl. Between the two of them one will weaken."

"No harm trying it. Just tell her this is my office, that I'll be back soon. And, Ferd, be careful. Don't let your temper make a fool of you."

The gambler laughed good-naturedly and motioned for Bowen to leave. But the moment he was alone his pale face became convulsed with rage.

"—— him!" he whispered. "A low, sneaking, yellow dog! Now I'm in here he thinks to talk brash to me. He thinks to hog it all by pumping Old Idaho. I'll pay him out for it. Wish Curks was here. Wonder if he's got some game on the side. Most likely. I must get out of here, or they'll all work to do me."

A light step in the corridor ended his disturbing soliloquy and sent him into a deep chair, which stood back to the door. He was invisible until one came close to the table. He had barely seated himself before the door swung open. He heard her advancing to the table, where the big guns acted as a magnet. He glanced up and met her surprized gaze.

"I didn't want to see you!" she exclaimed.

He sat up and smiled.

"You want to see the sheriff, I suppose. Take a chair. He'll be here in a minute."

"I want to see Shoshoni Hale," she corrected.

"But you'll have to see Sheriff Bowen first. Take a chair and be comfortable."

She seated herself on the edge of a chair and stared at him thoughtfully.

"Prisoners are taken good care of here," she remarked.

"Some are," he qualified.

"Where's Shoshoni Hale?" she demanded.

"In a cell."

"What will they do with him?"

"Hang him."

She clenched her small hands, and the muscles of her slim throat worked convulsively as she endeavored to speak.

"That is, that's what the mob will try to do," he added. "Hale can escape if he'll tell where he got the dust he planted in your cabin when he removed the counterfeit dust your grandfather had hidden there."

"You lie, and you know I know it," she cried out in a choked voice. "My grandfather had no counterfeit dust."

"You're the first one to say that word to me and not swallow it," he muttered, staring at her balefully. "I think you're the only one that can do it. I'll take 'most anything from you. We'll not talk about your grandfather. You want Hale to go free?"

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She bowed her head, not trusting herself to speak for fear she would succumb to the hysteria now besieging her reason. Hale's two hand-guns told her of his helpless condition.

"It's easy then," continued Patterson soothingly. "You tell us where he got his dust. We know he's been working Lucky Tom's diggings."

"There isn't anything I can tell you," she slowly replied. "I don't want to talk with you, or any one. I must see Hale."

"Hale murdered Lucky Tom. He killed three other men. Idaho City says he murdered them."

"That's a lie. He never killed the miner."

Patterson's face, bleached out by many nights at the gaming-table, became ghastly under the contempt of her tone. He felt the devil in him rising and struggling to escape control. Reason told him to choke the beast back, and yet for the moment the secret diggings were of almost no account. He softly told her:

"You've said that twice. The third time you'll pay. Pay my way."

"That's another lie," she told him.

"You young limb!" he snarled.

The beast was loosed. Lunging forward he grabbed across the table at her wrists. She tried to escape, but not before he had captured a hand. Instantly her free hand caught up one of Hale's revolvers. Poking the muzzle between his eyes, she warned—

"Quit, or I'll shoot."

He released her and picked up the other gun. She taunted him, saying:

"Even you don't dare kill a woman—in here. Drop it!"

"I drop," he said.

The weapon clanged on the table, and he sank back in his chair, weak and trembling. She picked up the second gun and informed him:

"I won't wait any longer. You can tell the sheriff I got tired."

He leaped to his feet and demanded—

"Where are you going—with those guns?"

"To see Shoshoni Hale," she answered, backing toward the door.

"Not by a —— sight!" he cried. "Grab her, Bowen!"

She wheeled, and his ruse almost succeeded. He leaped forward to seize her, but with a twist of her lithe body she evaded the rush and brought him to a plunging halt.

"Get back to your chair," she warned.

He retreated. The door opened and Bowen thrust in his head. Instantly the girl had him covered and was sidling toward him.

"Open that door," she commanded.

"See here, young lady—" he furiously began.

She cut him short by cocking a gun. His hands instinctively went above his head.

"Now lead me to Shoshoni Hale's cell," she ordered. "If any one tries to stop me I'll shoot."

Their end of the corridor was empty for the minute, and as the sheriff felt the gun prodding his back he lost no time in conducting her to the prisoner's cell. When he halted before a grated door she told him to open it.

"Are you crazy?" he wrathfully shouted.

Hale ran to the door and stared bewildered at his visitor.

"Be ready to come out, Shoshoni, when he opens the door. I've got your guns. I came the minute I heard about it."

"Great snakes!" stammered Hale. "You, Miss Harry! Bowen, you get out of here!"

"He must open the door—" began the girl; but the sheriff already was running up the corridor.

With a heart-broken sob the girl cried:

"Oh, you've thrown away your chance, Shoshoni Hale! You've thrown away your chance!"

"God bless you, Miss Harry. But it isn't the right way. I'll see this through. I'll never hide again."

"They'll hang you! They've planned to hang you. They say they'll let you escape if I tell about the diggings. I'll tell gladly ——"

"No!" he sternly commanded. "Then they would hang me for sure. You'll tell nothing. You know nothing. But, Miss Harry, the sight of you is better'n a mile lead in the open with Pinaquana at her best. Go to the stable on the Boise City road——"

"My horse is there."

"Then it won't bother you any to take a look at Pinaquana. She likes you, being the sensible little lady that she is."

The hopelessness of it all overcame her. She knew the implacable purpose of Patterson. She knew the sheriff was the gambler's tool. Between them the two could control Hale's destiny long enough to see

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him hanged. She rested her head on the ledge of the door and wept.

He reached a hand through the bars and clumsily patted the disheveled locks and twisted her hat awry.

"You go and find Jack Gorman," he said. "But you mustn't come here again. Gorman will do all any man can. I only ask for a chance to prove certain things. They're taking their time with Patterson. They can give me a day or two."

"Can Gorman help you?" she eagerly asked.

"More than any other man. He's a friend of Ben Riply's. Riply doesn't feel friendly to me, I'm thinking. But he's a just man. Find Gorman. A delay of two or three days will fix everything all right."

"I'll talk to Riply. I'll make him believe in you."

"Riply's out of town, I think." He smiled grimly. "Hand my guns back to the sheriff and find Gorman."

"I'll keep the guns," she quietly informed him. "I left my rifle at the stable. I reckon I'll feel more at home with your guns."

She hurried down the corridor and found the sheriff and a deputy waiting for her. Both gave ground as she raised a gun.

"You drop those weapons!" shouted the sheriff, infuriated at the thought of the town's amusement when the story got out about the girl's success in securing Shoshoni Hale's belt-guns.

SHE gained the outside door, and they did not dare to impede her progress. Once in the street she found herself surrounded by a boisterous crowd, who made many comments but offered her no incivility. Word was passed that she had entered the jail and taken Shoshoni Hale's guns. Several began cheering her with high enthusiasm.

Alarmed at the bearded faces pressing about her, she redoubled her efforts and soon discovered there was none who wished to annoy her. She finally worked her way clear of the crowd, and as the guns attracted notice she hid them in her blouse. Her visit to the jail had been a failure, she told herself, and there was but one place she knew of where she could go and rearrange her plans. This was the Craft-Vantine store, where her grandfather had deposited his gold dust for safekeeping.

Vantine came to wait on her and readily recognized her. She asked permission to leave the two long Colt revolvers. He eyed her curiously, but asked no questions. After showing her where she could leave the weapons he inquired for her grandfather.

"He left home day before yesterday. From what he said I reckoned he was bringing some dust here to put in your strong-box."

"If he was in town he did not call. Can we help you in any way?"

"If you can help me get Shoshoni Hale out of jail."

"Hale is safer just now in jail," he told her. "His is a very grave case, Miss Harry."

"He's innocent!" she protested.

"I hope so. I hope he'll have no trouble proving it," he quietly replied.

His words and his manner chilled her. She began to fear that the worst might happen. It was inconceivable, and yet the merchant had his doubts. She waited only to ask where she could find Gorman, and, Vantine being unable to tell her, she returned to the street. She hoped to find him in the jostling crowds, but although she fought her way up and down the streets and waited patiently on various corners she was unsuccessful.

During the afternoon there was a perceptible change in the town's attitude toward Hale, measured by those who were abroad and inclined to be noisy. The curiosity of the morning was being replaced by demands that Hale be hanged forthwith. At first these bloodthirsty demands terrified the girl, but as she gave closer heed she decided the threats were not seriously made, and were either the speech of drunken men, or of outsiders who had hurried to town to witness the excitement and wanted a climax before returning to their scattered claims.

When weary of walking and standing, she returned to the store and was informed by a clerk that both proprietors were at a business session with other merchants. Had she known that it was a secret conference, and that the proposition to hang both Hale and Patterson without waiting for Ben Riply to return was voted down by a narrow margin, she would have forgotten her weariness. As Riply was prominent in the Payette Committee and had worked zealously in organizing the Idaho City

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tribunal, the wish of the conservative section of the new committee to delay action was heeded.

During this serious debate the rough element of the town was growing more bold in demanding Hale's instant demise. Each hour dropped behind by the sun found the milling mob's ferocity greatly increased. From drunken boisterousness the temper of the idle and vicious changed to animal savagery.

At sunset Vantine and his partner entered the store, their faces reflecting their grave concern. Miss Harry was curled up on a pile of blankets, a disconsolate and pathetic little figure. Beside her were Hale's two guns.

"Lord bless me! A girl dressed like a boy!" exclaimed Craft.

"Prescott's daughter," reminded Vantine. "Miss Harry, I'm sorry you didn't take your horse and ride home. This is no place for you. The town is filled with drunken men. You must go up to my house and be sure to keep indoors."

"Shoshoni Hale? What'll they do with him?" she faintly asked.

"We're waiting for Ben Riply to show up," was Craft's evasive answer. "Shoshoni a friend of yours?"

She nodded, and the tears began creeping from under the long lashes.

Craft gravely continued: "We heard about your taking the guns from the jail. That wasn't a nice thing to do."

"I offered to fetch him out and he wouldn't come," she groaned.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Craft. "Well, it showed he had more confidence in his case than some others have. You come back into our office where you can be alone and more comfortable."

She jumped from the blankets and stuffed the revolvers into the blouse. "Thank you both, but I must see about my horse. Then I may go up to Mr. Vantine's."

Vantine tried to persuade her to go at once, offering to go in person and see that the horse was being properly cared for, but she stubbornly refused and hurried into the street.

The night came quickly. Lights in saloons and stores illuminated patches of the street. Several street corners were lighted up by small bonfires. Each of these junctions was a rallying-point for the drink-befuddled and the lawless. Through alternate darkness and light the girl made her way to the stable and secured her horse and rifle. She called Pinaquana by name and the mare squealed in great delight at the familiar voice.

"You know her? She belongs to Hale. Wonder who'll git her," said the stable-keeper.

"Shoshoni don't go to sell Pinaquana—you brute!" fiercely retorted the girl.

Clearing her eyes of tears, she turned back to the main thoroughfare. A wild chorus, demanding Hale's life, met her even before she sighted the yelling mob. She dully wondered why the entire community should feel such a terrible enmity against one man. As she galloped to the edge of the crowd filling the street, drunken men jostled against her horse. One brute, foul from drink, recognized her sex and bawled an unprintable name. Her rifle-barrel cracked him over the head and dropped him senseless for others to tread upon. The incident frightened her. It aroused her first fear of danger to herself. She worked the horse up the street in an effort to gain the jail.

Now some subtle intelligence seemed to permeate the various groups, for without any signal, without any message by word of mouth that the girl could note, there began a general movement toward the jail. Bands of men met and became a unit.

At first the movement was a drifting one, almost casual. Soon it became organized with the lynchers walking eight abreast. Curiously enough the overtones of ferocity died down as the mass became purposeful; and the sullen tramping of the rough boots was worse in Miss Harry's ears than the wildest of screams, or the most vindictive vituperation.

Leaders began to discover themselves, men who acted as file-closers. Miss Harry turned her horse down the first cross-street and galloped ahead to intercept the procession. When she sighted it again torches were springing up at various intervals. With distended eyes she watched the long lines approach. She held her arm across her eyes after discovering that the tall man in the lead was carrying a coil of new rope on his arm. He was drunk and walked with an attempt at dignity as if observing some ritual.

As the head of the procession drew abreast of the girl there was an entire

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absence of shouting, but there was the voice of doom in the tramping feet. Her slight frame shook and she clutched at the pommel to keep from falling.

Trampl Trampl fell the inexorable feet. They were trampling the life from Shoshoni Hale's prostrate body. They were trampling her hopes into the grave. With a queer little cry she wheeled her horse and retreated down the cross street.

Where was Jack Gorman? He claimed to be a friend of Hale. If within twenty miles of Idaho City he must have heard of Hale's capture before this. She turned into the street that ran parallel to Main and rode madly to get to the jail ahead of the mob. The torches had multiplied until they painted a rosy streak in the velvet sky. The street corners and all openings between buildings were filled with women and timid men. The girl was compelled to pull her mount down to a walk when she tried to enter the vantage points long since preempted by those who knew the mob was to be fed and that a man was to die. These side gatherings were very quiet.

As she sent her horse drifting sidewise through the silent, waiting masses of spectators there came loud shouting. She was deaf to the objurgations and curses of those her horse plowed to one side. She believed they had dragged Shoshoni Hale from jail and were hanging him. With a scream she jumped the nervous animal into the main thoroughfare and found herself at the tail-end of the procession.

"Hi, sister! Git to —— out of here!" bawled a not unkindly voice.

Ahead was the jail and the bright glare of accumulated torches. She no longer attempted to pick her way, but with shrill cries of warning forced the horse ahead, with the men scrambling aside to escape the prancing hoofs. She rode with her eyes focused on the jail, with her rifle held high, and she left a wake of curses. Those who would have resented her rough passing with something stronger than words were left behind before they could translate their rage into physical acts. And last she plowed her horse through the front ranks, backed the animal against a building nearly opposite the jail and leaned forward to learn the truth.

There were two groups of men before the jail and they seemed to be wrangling fiercely. Nor was the flash of steel missing as the torchlight touched on drawn pistol and knife. Close by the girl, men were yelling:

"Time's up! Drag him out! Git out the way, you gospel-slingers!"

The girl prodded a fat man in the neck with the muzzle of her rifle, and he leaped convulsively like a dying fish.

"What are they doing?" she asked as he swung his head about and stared stupidly at the brown barrel.

"Gang of store-keepers and a gospel-slinger's trying to stop justice," he answered. "Say, don't you know it hurts when you ram that gun-barrel into a feller's neck?"

"They've stopped the lynching?"

"Naw; they ain't stopped no lynching. They're bluffing." Then he turned back and howled: "Ya-a-ah! Hang him! Hang him!"

The rifle-barrel cracked down on his thick skull; the horse's hind-quarters caught him fair and dashed him violently against those in front of him.

With a howl of rage he scrambled to his feet and, encouraged by the invectives of the men he had bumped, struggled to get at the girl. A pair of strong arms caught Miss Harry around the waist and pulled her from the saddle.

"Git through that door and into the house, you little fool!" growled the man, pushing her toward the doorway close by and then turning to discourage the advance of the irate citizen.

The horse bolted along the edge of the crowd. Miss Harry slipped through the doorway, still clutching her rifle, and, frantic to behold what was going on, ran up-stairs to the second floor and took her place at a window. The tenants of the house must have been out on the street, as she saw no one to question her intrusion as she leaned out of the window and stared down on the wild scene. The man she had felled was up again, leaping and shouting, a part of the savage chorus.

The Big Thought of the night possessed all minds. The torches danced and bobbed, and some went to the ground and threw out many sparks as heavy boots trampled upon them. The street was chaos, yet the girl began to make sense out of the scene. The thin line of men now being pressed back and hurled aside were representative citizens trying to stay the mob. The roar of exultation swept to the building, and the

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men below the girl's window surged forward.

With the exception of a few square yards before the entrance the space before the jail was packed with hooting, gesticulating madmen. From her elevated position the girl saw the man with the coil of new rope standing in this little opening. A voice was shouting from an upper window of the jail. The mob ceased its wolf cries and the booming voice of its spokesman answered the call from the window. The message was most peremptory and consisted of the one word—

"Hale!"

Bowen at the window yelled back something about "law and order," and "the wheels of justice."

Again the booming voice demanded—

"Hale!"

There was no chance for debate or argument. With the one word this leader swept aside all pleas, all logic, all humanity. The crowd caught up the name, and in staccato volume began shouting: "Hale! Hale! Hale!"

Bowen vanished from the window. A command was shouted. There came the nerve-tingling tintinnabulous protest of breaking glass, the splitting crescendo of the stout door's downfall. A moment of tense silence, as when a murderer pauses to gaze on his work, then a terrific uproar. And all Idaho City knew the mob was inside the jail and had bagged its prey.

The noise in the jail suddenly dropped to nothing. The pandemonium outside was as abruptly hushed. Without a shot being fired in defense of the prisoner he was brought through the doorway, a man clinging to each arm, a dozen men crowding behind him; and the man with the coiled rope faced about and walked in the lead. Across the street was a stunted white oak, a skeleton of a tree except for a scraggly head-dress, where the more persistent leaves adhered to the tops of the otherwise bare branches.

Miss Harry leaned rigid and helpless across the window-sill and stared at the pallid white trunk of the tree. And yet she was abnormally conscious of insignificant details of the tableau. She noted the swagger of the man with the rope—his way of showing regard for the importance of his hideous office. She observed the quiet, orderly demeanor of what had been a raveningmob. For now that the gruesome spectacle was assured each participant relaxed. A man was walking fussily up and down the front line of spectators and urging the people to keep back and not to inconvenience the executioners; and this although there was no attempt made to intrude on the cleared space.

Directly below the window a man cried out—

"It'll be a lively night at the Gold Dust after this is over." There was much relish in his voice.

After it was over? Why, then everything would be over! The world would come to an end so far as Old Idaho's granddaughter was concerned. Her blood had been ice; now it was fire. Before she realized her purpose she was shrilly crying:

"You stop to hang an innocent man while Lyon and his friends are locating diamond-diggings within a few miles of my home! You turn beasts while wise men are rushing to the lost gold diggings! You stop to kill, and a fortune waits for the first comers within twenty miles of the Payette! Every minute you waste here is costing some one a fortune. I've been in the lost gulch and have panned out gold. Turn that man loose and find enough free gold to make you all rich for life. Lyon picks up diamonds at the mouth of the gulch while you commit murder!"

The man with the rope swung about and gaped wonderingly in an attempt to locate the voice. There was a general stirring throughout the crowd as the leaven began to work. From the jail a voice yelled:

"Make her shut her mouth! Hang him!"

"That's Patterson! He wants the secret for his own!" she shrilly screamed. "Today he offered to let Hale go if I'd tell him how to find the gulch."

Hoarse shouts from the mob greeted this charge, and portions of it began to disintegrate. Men glanced suspiciously at their neighbors. Here and there a sudden swirling in the crowd told of the gold-hungry working their way down the street. The girl was quick to observe her words had halted the execution. Flushed with hope, she leaned farther from the window and screamed:

"I'm Harriet Prescott, Old Idaho's granddaughter. I've been in the gulch. It's full of gold. Lyon and Fogus are hunting diamonds at its mouth without knowing it's

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there. Are you fools, or very rich men, that you're willing to lose fortunes for the sake of murdering an innocent man?"

The withdrawals from the outskirts of the mob became more marked. Small bodies of men hurried through the cross-street. The outmost rim of the massed humanity began to melt away, first as individuals, then in groups, then in masses. From the jail window rang out the accusation:

"It was Lucky Tom's gulch! Hale murdered him! String him up while you have him!"

"Lucky Tom's lost diggings!"

"Hale stole the Lost Gulch!" another shouted.

As these cries were repeated the man with the rope came to life and threw the coil over a gnarled limb. The noose was already fashioned. All those surrounding Hale were impatient to have it over with so they might join in the search of the new diggings. Hale now raised his powerful voice and begged:

"Go away, Miss Harry! It'll make it easier for me."

The new rope showed almost white in the torchlight. It wriggled and shook and then became stationary as the noose was thrown over Hale's head. The girl, half out of the window, raised her Henry repeater and began firing. The second bullet cut the rope half through. Before the men holding the free end could brace themselves to pull, the rope was completely severed.

Yells of rage were hurled at the girl, and men started for the house. Pulling out one of Hale's guns, she sent a bullet into the road and warned—

"Keep back!"

"Some one drag her out of that house," howled a man in the background.

"Shoot Hale if she fires again!" roared the voice from the jail.

She threw up the rifle and drilled a hole through the window above the speaker's head. A man laughed hysterically.

"Turn Hale loose and I'll lead you to the lost diggings," her penetrating falsetto promised.

"She's lying!"

"She's telling the truth!"

"We can find the gulch without any help. We don't want Hale filing any discovery claim. He killed Lucky Tom!"

A cheer greeted the last. Hale was crowded forward so the shortened rope might be thrown over the limb.

"Shoot him if the girl tries to take a hand," was the general advice offered the executioners.

A revolver was clapped against Hale's head.

"Hi! What's that?" yelled a nervous voice.

It was a peculiar resounding rhythm, more of a vibration than a sound. As it obtruded on the mob's comprehension the men holding the rope allowed it to hang slack as they turned their heads and stared apprehensively into the surrounding darkness. It was a staccato *thudding*, ever growing louder, a menacing diapason, such as children sometimes hear in the night and know to be the heavy footfalls of giants.

It became the warning of many hoof-beats, streaked through with the metallic *clickety-click* of a rider or two galloping some distance in advance of the main body. And out of the night and among the torches galloped Riply and Gorman. They spurred to the white-oak and Gorman cut the rope. Riply drove his mount among the hangmen.

"He's innocent! We have proof he is innocent!" cried Riply. "Let no man harm him. Judge Curks will tell you Hale's innocent. Drop that rope, you men! Fifty Shoshoni warriors are coming down that road. Curks is with them. They're horse and buffalo Indians. They bring Curks to tell you Hale is innocent. They come to take Hale away. Get back! Get back!"

And as he spoke he lifted the noose from Hale's neck, and Gorman reached down and cut the cords pinioning his hands at his back. Bewilderment gave way to rage in some; others found they were much afraid. Gorman and Riply kept between Hale and the mob. But even then some one might have reached him with knife or bullet had it not been for the sudden appearance of the Indians. They came into the bright glare as if emerging from a wall of ebony.

Ahead rode Black Cloud, wonderfully painted and wearing the head-dress of one who has carried the pipe four times on a big war-path. Back of him came Curks, more cadaverous, more anatomical, than ever. A warrior rode on each side of him. Then came the other braves, riding four abreast, so many grim statues in bronze.

Black Cloud stared straight ahead, his gaze centered on Hale. He left it for his

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braves to watch the flanks. Riply had slightly exaggerated their numbers, yet there were forty of them.

And as they advanced Riply and Gorman renewed their warning for none to shoot, or interfere with the visitors.

"Listen to Curks!" urged Riply. "Curks, come ahead and speak your piece."

Judge Curks, of Boise City, forged ahead as the Indians came to a halt. Men who were half-minded to open fire on the Indians decided to hear what Sheriff Bowen's friend had to say. Because of his overwhelming rage Curks' voice conveyed but little information at first.

"I was invited to ride to Placerville with this man Riply," he hoarsely announced. "I was captured by these Indians and most inhumanely treated. That villain there," and he turned and pointed to Black Cloud, "ordered his devils to torture me, *me*, a judge in this Territory of Idaho."

"Louder! Louder!" yelled the background of the mob.

"They burned my feet," shrieked Curks. "And this man Riply got me into it."

"Jack Gorman told me he could prove Hale never killed Lucky Tom. He said I must ride to Placerville to get the proof," loudly broke in Riply. "He wanted me to bring Curks as a witness to the evidence, so that Bowen and his friends couldn't say the proof was cooked up. I did so. The Indians scooped us up. Gorman had planned it. He knew they would do it. He did not know they also would take him along as a third witness. Curks was scared by Black Cloud, a friend of Hale's, a leader of the Shoshoni.

"The Indians toasted Curks' feet a bit, and I saw it done. Then Curks told the truth about Lucky Tom's death, and they rubbed bear's oil on his feet and fetched him back here to talk to you. Now, Curks, tell the truth or back you go, and they won't stop at your feet the next time." The last was in an aside.

At mention of his name Black Cloud sent his pony alongside of Curks. The Boise City judge cast one glance at the savage face, then measured the uncertain strength of the mob. Behind Black Cloud were the Indians, forty of them, and they were all ready to act as one, instantly to carry out their leader's orders. Of the mob there were left between two and three hundred men, many of them drunk, many of them present out of a ferocious curiosity, but unwilling to participate in the killing. They had been hurriedly organized to lynch Hale but not to fight Indians.

"Come, white snake," hissed Black Cloud.

"Oh, God! Not that!" cried Curks. Then to the wavering gathering: "Lucky Tom was killed by Tod Mushet, Burnham and Weber Joe. Weber Joe confessed to me the night he was killed. I—I intended to tell at the proper time. Weber Joe told me how they shot the miner from behind, thinking he was Hale. I believe the man told me the truth." Then to Riply, "Now may I go, sir, or are these —— hounds to have me again?"

"Wait!" called out Hale. And his right hand went to Curk's face until the ear was locked between the thumb and first finger. "Tell who killed my father in 'Fifty-nine. Don't lie, or I'll talk in Shoshoni to Black Cloud."

Curks wet his dry lips and proclaimed—

"Mushet, Burnham and Weber Joe killed Hale's father six years ago."

"Just a moment, Curks. Is that you, Vantine? Did you hear the words of Judge Curks? Good! You'll assure the committee Hale is innocent?"

"Some of them are here. We tried to stop the mob from taking Hale, but they were too strong for us. We'll make a better argument now," answered the merchant from the back of the crowd.

And what the girl had taken to be an uneasy stirring in the crowd now resolved itself into the steady advance of a file of determined citizens, each man openly carrying weapons.

A grotesque element was introduced into the strained situation when the man who had carried the rope suddenly yelled—

"Every one's gone to find the Lucky Gulch diggings! I'm off!"

His precipitate desertion acted as a signal for a general dispersal. Jack Gorman then took time to run to Miss Harry's window. He tilted back his head and greeted her:

"Close shave, but thanks to you we came in time to turn the jack. It's been Black Cloud's game. My part was to decoy Riply and Curks to Placerville where the Injuns was hiding outside the town. And darn their red hides if they didn't take me along with t'others for good measure! Oughter seen how quick Curks took water

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when they stretched his feet over the fire."

"I've got to say something to you, Jack Gorman," said the girl. "It may be hard listening for you, but I hope not."

While she leaned out the window and talked rapidly and earnestly the citizens' committee assumed entire control of the prisoner. After Curks had been induced for a second time to recite Weber Joe's confession quick action was taken formally to declare Hale innocent and at liberty to depart. A delegation was appointed to wait on Bowen in the jail and inform him Hale was not to be troubled again. His killing of the three assassins was voted to be a wholesome act and not one to be criticized by the tardy courts.

Hale was somewhat dazed by the swift changes in his affairs. He shook hands in a mechanical fashion, and listened to congratulation that his ears did not hear. He was conscious only of Black Cloud's haughty bearing and the picture formed by the girl at the window with Gorman staring up at her. After the handshaking was finished Hale reached out a hand for Black Cloud to clasp. No words were said, but the grip of their fingers told it all.

Gorman now came to him, a peculiar expression on his lively face.

"Shoshoni," he began, "how happen you were caught in the daytime without a chance to use your guns?"

Hale drew him aside and whispered:

"You must never tell any one this. Old Idaho betrayed me. He was in hiding and looking on when I was taken. I saw him. The bottom of my heart just dropped plumb out. I quit, meek as a sheep."

"Good Heavens! That makes him bad as Patterson! Yes, worse!" gasped Gorman.

"No. It shows he's crazy. He came to the gulch and asked me to call at the cabin on a certain day; and I hadn't reckoned to go there again, Jack. But he stirred up my hopes; then when I rode into the ambush I didn't have the heart to make any fight. I quit cold. He put the day far enough ahead so he'd have time to come here and give me away to Bowen. But he's a madman. He isn't responsible. I wouldn't tell you a word of this, Jack, if it wasn't for Miss Harry. She must never know. Better take her away, Jack, out of the country. Take her away before she learns the truth from Bowen's blabbing."

With a ghastly attempt at a smile Gorman replied:

"I don't think I'll take her away, Shoshoni. And she's waiting to talk to you."

"And I'm waiting to thank her for saving my life," muttered Shoshoni as he turned to go to her.

Miss Harry had left the house and was standing before the open door. Now that the danger was over the slight figure was no longer erect. The reaction was tremendous, and only by will-power did she keep on her feet. It hurt her to see Hale shaking hands with the citizens, talking with Gorman, talking with every one while she waited. Then Hale was standing beside her.

"Howdy, Shoshoni," she greeted with a brave attempt at unconcern. "Quite a fuss. But it's all ended. Here's your guns. Fetched them along thinking you might be wanting them."

"And you fetched your rifle and saved my neck."

"Oh, shooting comes natural to me. Where's Jack Gorman going?"

"I'll call him back," Hale quickly offered, withdrawing his hand.

"I've had my talk with Jack," she gravely informed him.

"I reckoned you was keen to talk some more with him. I'm leaving this country pretty soon. Pinaquana doesn't like down here. I'm not going to try to thank you for all the fine things you've done for me."

"Ain't your affairs cleared up enough now so's you're free to talk?" she passionately demanded.

"Why—yes," he faltered. "I couldn't talk with the charge of murder hanging over me. Now that charge's wiped out there's no use talking."

"You're talking now like some idiot!" she upbraided him.

"Good Lord! I never did hit you right, Miss Harry—you'll never know how near I once was to saying certain things—things I ain't any right to say now, nor hint at. Before I reckoned that Gorman——"

"Drat Gorman!" she explosively cried. "See here, if you'll make me say it: how could I tell Gorman I was your girl when you'd never asked me?"

He was silent for a minute, trying to comprehend the potentials of this query. At last he muttered:

"Was that what Jack meant? That he didn't reckon he'd take you away?"

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"He never had any chance—that way. I like him. That's all." And to his horror she began to whimper.

To comfort her he began to talk even as she had dreamed he might talk some day. Gold-mad miners pressed forward to demand that the girl pilot them to the lost diggings, only to fall back as Hale, still holding his two guns, gave them a glance and gestured for them to retire. Black Cloud rode up and with Indian imperturbability observed the red man's etiquette by refraining from intruding. When Hale paused to get his second wind the girl sighed ecstatically and murmured:

"I never knew there was such lovely talk in the world. But Shoshoni, tell me: you've always been honest with women?"

"Great snakes, Miss Harry! Women? Why, you're my first experience with the critter. But here's Black Cloud waiting to speak to you. Hear him now, for he 'n' his braves ought to be digging out before some drunken fool takes a shot at 'em. And they're bad people to shoot at."

He raised his hand, and Black Cloud rode closer. The Indian placed a hand on his breast, where rested the medicine gift, and proudly informed them:

"The boy-girl's medicine grows stronger every sleep. It makes Black Cloud's eyes see where the eagle can not see. It makes the Snake God's heart grow warm toward the Shoshoni. Now Black Cloud goes back to the northern Shoshoni, who live in teepees and make the Sioux run like old women. He will be chief and carry the pipe and dance many scalps."

Hale interpreted for him. The Indian continued:

"If the boy-girl wants some one killed let her make two smokes on the second ridge north of her home. Some of the Idaho warriors will see it and come to her. Give them this. It will be sent over the mountains to Black Cloud. He will come, singing a new death song for them about to die."

He handed over to her a piece of dressed skin on which was painted a black patch against a field of blue. From the top of the patch extended wavy medicine lines.

Hale explained:

"A black cloud in the blue sky. The snaky looking lines means he's become a medicine-man because of his new medicine. Say something strong. I'll interpret it!"

Miss Harry reached out both hands and grasped the warrior's sinewy right hand and talked earnestly, the tears standing in her eyes. Black Cloud disapproved of the tears—a sign of weakness. Hale interpreted her speech and included so many extravagant bits of praise—always dear to the red heart—that the Indian expanded his deep chest proudly and said:

"The boy-girl is very big medicine. They say she does, not weep because she is a squaw. They say the water in her eyes is rain-medicine, sent by the Snake God. Black Cloud rides down the valley road as far as the old white-haired chief's house."

Hale explained, and urged:

"Ride along with them, Miss Harry. I'll overtake you in no time. Pinaquana is crazy to run her head off. Their ponies are tired. I'm anxious they get out of town before some drunken scamp starts trouble."

HALE and Black Cloud examined the ashes in the fire-place and agreed no fire had burned there for forty-eight hours. The girl promptly said:

"He's at the gulch. He must be brought back home. His mind isn't right."

"The Indian and I will go. You must stay here. If any prospectors saw you with us they'd follow, thinking you were leading us to the diggings." Then in Shoshoni:

"Let my red brother tell his braves to camp in the cottonwoods till we return. They will watch the cabin while we are gone. There are bad white men riding up and down the valley."

As they started for the hidden gulch Black Cloud was uneasy and said:

"The evil spirits are busy in the ghost place. My medicine tells me it is bad to be there. Black Cloud will go, for his white brother has said the old man has been touched by the Snake God."

He rested his hand on his head and rotated his extended index finger above his head in the sign for the mentally unbalanced, therefore under the protection of the gods.

They came within a mile of the vine hidden entrance and Hale was congratulating himself on the absence of wandering prospectors when Black Cloud vehemently exclaimed in English:

"No good! Old man make smoke."

Hale shaded his eyes against the glare of the sun and said:

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"I see no smoke. It is haze Black Cloud sees."

The Indian's lips curled scornfully.

"Smoke!" he repeated. "Bad spirit whisper in old man's ear. Old man make smoke."

They galloped closer and the smoke became discernible to Hale. First it was a faint perpendicular streak but quickly increased in volume. Eager to enter and extinguish the fire, they urged their mounts into a gallop, only to pull them down to a walk as a figure burst through the vines. It was Old Idaho, and he was carrying his long muzzle-loading rifle. That he recognized them was evident by his shrill command:

"Git back there, Shoshoni Hale. You're a dead man. You was hung at Idaho City. Don't you try to ha'nt me. Git back!"

Up came the rifle. The Indian went over the side of his pony with only the toes of his moccasin showing, and Hale, stupefied, felt the wind of the bullet. Instantly after firing the old man darted back through the vines.

"Come along!" shouted Hale. "We must git him before he loads!"

"Evil spirits will load his gun fast!" muttered Black Cloud, seizing Pinaquana's bridle.

"Let go, Black Cloud! Stay here. I'll ride in alone."

"Black Cloud's medicine says my white brother must keep out," cried the Indian, closing his fingers on Pinaquana's nose and shutting off her wind.

"——, Black Cloud! I'd draw a gun on any one else who did that. You're as crazy as the old man. Let go, I say!"

Black Cloud released the struggling mare but threw an arm around Hale's waist and pulled him from the saddle.

"Boy-girl's medicine says stay out," he grunted as Hale fought to release himself.

Hale ceased his struggling, and growled—

"He's had time to reload, and we must wait till he takes another shot." They watched the vines, expecting a second bullet. After a minute had passed Hale declared—

"I'm going in."

There was a rumbling and grumbling and the ground shook beneath them. Then came a prolonged rushing, crashing, roaring sound which increased to a terrific climax. High above the top of the gulch-walls, billowed and crawled enormous clouds of dust. At first the low sun riddled them with fiery lanes; then they rolled far outward and obscured the light, and a fine rain of rock débris fell on the two friends.

"Evil spirit tip mountain over!" whispered Black Cloud, shaken to the depths of his superstitious soul. "Boy-girl medicine very strong. Speaks with straight tongue. Old white-hair first white man to enter there. Evil spirits get him."

"Good ——! The old man toted more powder in there and has pulled the cliffs down on him!" choked Hale.

They camped outside that night, and by morning the dust clouds had dissipated enough to reveal the top of the eastern wall, although a yellow haze bleached the blue of the heavens for a wide area. Black Cloud would not approach nearer, but worked with his medicine while Hale went to investigate. The corridor was filled in, but by some strange freak the curtain of vines remained practically intact. With immense effort Hale climbed up the old slide until he could gaze into the shallow, murky depression of what had been Lost Gulch. The leaning cliff had fallen, as had the wall by the spring. Huge sections of the opposite wall likewise had been pulled down, and the raw, broken rock had buried the diggings many feet deep from side to side. There was no chance that any living thing could have escaped that terrific deluge of rock.

THE band of Indians halted on a low ridge while Hale and the girl rode down the river road to cross the Snake above Old Fort Boise, thence to strike into the Oregon road over the Blue Mountains.

"They're gone, Shoshoni," she said with a little catch in her voice.

Once more Hale turned and looked back. The forty warriors had vanished, but as he gazed a lone horseman rode to the top of a knoll. It was Black Cloud. He touched his breast, then passed his hand slowly outward at arm's length and then abruptly struck it edgewise toward the ground.

"He says he is going home," whispered Hale.

The Indian raised his two hands before his chest, holding them a foot apart, and slowly moved them toward and from each other several times; then the right hand was abruptly tossed back.

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"He says, 'We shall see each other no more!'"

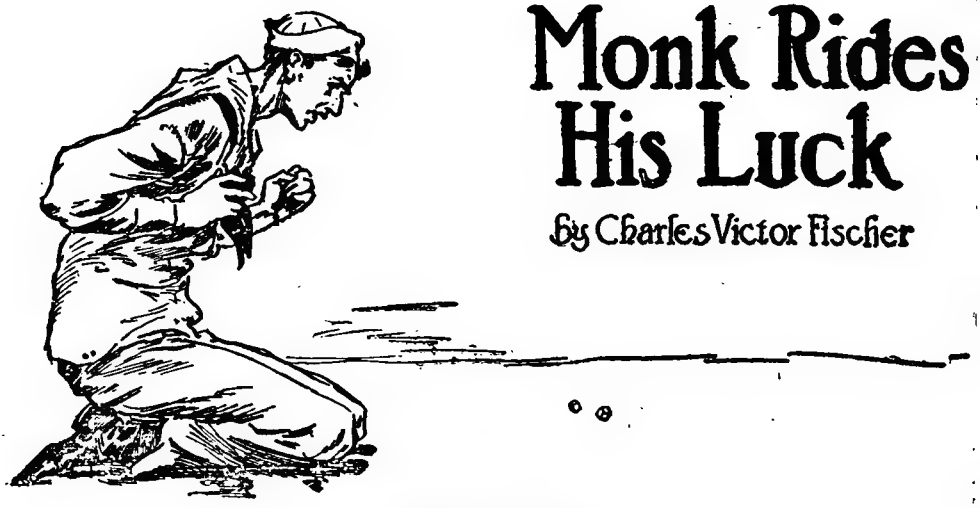
Hale half-extended his right hand and held his left hand before him, then thrust his right to full arm's length and drew the left back to his side—"Ahead of others," or "Chief." Red and white gave a final flourish of upraised hands and looked back no more, although the plaintive song Black Cloud extemporized in honor of their going accompanied them for some minutes. For several miles Hale stared between the ears of his mare; then a hand tugged at his fringed sleeve, and Miss Harry—as Shoshoni Hale always called his wife—was gently reminding:

"We must be happy now if we want to be happy in the valley of the Willamette. No gold-hunting, no gun-fighting. Just us."

"Just you."

And his eyes told her more than words ever could.

THE END



Monk Rides His Luck

by Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Up the Pole"

IT WAS on a Saturday afternoon. A maze of battleships, cruisers, gunboats, destroyers and other craft of war rode at their anchors in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, about fifty miles east of the entrance to Santiago. In the forenoon, word had been passed on all the ships of the fleet that there would be baseball and recreation parties, leaving for the beach at one o'clock. And shortly after one, countless boatloads of white-clad sailors began to crowd in to the landing on the beach.

Probably the most serious-minded man in that entire seagoing horde was Monk Wilkins, a wireless operator of the U. S. S. *Abalone*. If Monk's big dream refused to materialize today, within two weeks he would have the choice of either "shipping over" in the navy for four more years, or facing the unsympathetic world with scarcely enough to purchase an outfit of civilian clothes.

Monk was blue. His four-year-long dream had all but turned out to be a dream. For nearly four years he had been coming south every winter, making these Saturday afternoon recreation trips ashore. And these recreation trips had kept him drained of every dollar Uncle Sam had given him.

Monk's big dream came to him on one of these recreation afternoons, when he was only a rooky in the service. That afternoon Monk saw a youngster from one of the battleships win seventeen thousand dollars at shooting craps. With admiring, fascinated eyes Monk had watched that victorious lad strut down to the landing, his jumper belted tight to him at the waist

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and bulging all around with green and yellow paper.

"A fortune in a couple of hours!"

So glorious an achievement Monk had never even dreamed of. Visioning himself in the shoes of the lucky youngster, he experienced a thrill that reached to his toes and finger. A coup like that for him would mean a farm out in Indiana. Thus, then and there was born Monk's big dream.

He saved. Through a long Spring, Summer and Fall he hoarded every spare dollar for the big Winter crap games when the fleet went south. His entire nine months' savings went in one afternoon.

Throughout another Spring, Summer and Fall he went without things he needed, and saved. And another Spring found him heading north—"broke."

This last year he had not accumulated much. The reason was Irene—a little girl in Norfolk, who had stolen into Monk's center of gravity, and inspired him to buy lavishly, with the result that this Winter found him heading south with only a very few dollars with which to buck the big games.

Hence, serious and blue was Monk that afternoon, as the gas engine of the big motor launch began to sputter, and he found himself, huddled in with a boatload of others, heading beachward. All those hundreds of lost dollars were passing in review before him. What a fool and a jackass he had been!

A measly wad of filthy bills, totaling about thirty dollars, stuck out of his jumper pocket. Fine chance he had of bucking the games with that much. Two weeks to do! Irene waiting for him! And he, like a blundering ass, had told Irene he had five thousand dollars in the bank! What had ever made him spring that whopper on her?

His train of self-reproach was broken abruptly by the boat bumping into the landing.

A scant half of those thousands of white-clad youngsters, after disembarking, moved straight ahead toward the baseball fields; a very few lingered about the ice-cream and soft drink canteens; while the major portion of the mob moved off along the beach toward a promontory a half-mile or so from the landing.

Very leisurely did these beach strollers move—until they had turned the point. Beyond that point of rock was the life and activity of an ant-hill. Men went down on their knees and prayed, and prayed, to the goddess of Chance to make the dice "break right." How so many blankets were brought ashore on those recreation afternoons, without arousing suspicion, has puzzled more than one. At any rate there were always enough blankets. And, as fast as the games already in progress became crowded, other blankets were spread out, and were quickly encircled by eager kneelers.

With feelings akin to those of a man mounting the gallows, Monk elbowed himself in to the edge of one of the blankets. It was his last chance—it could scarcely be called a chance.

"Shake 'em an' roll 'em," the money-handler snapped, as the dice came to him.

"Shake 'em!"

He couldn't do anything else! His hands shook as those of a man just out of the crawling horrors! He shook all over. He couldn't snap his fingers! No man can win at shooting craps without snapping his fingers.

"Somebody snap their fingers for me," he entreated plaintively, after coming out on the first roll with a pair of "snake eyes," and following that up with "Little Joe."

"Ah sho am yo huckleberry," responded a big mess attendant across the blanket, who was about three shades darker than the ace of spades. White was his name; he was attached to the same ship as Monk was—the *Abalone*.

"You rolls, an' ah snaps. When ah sees a man what shakes all ovah 'cause he's worried, ah knows he's right. You'se right—ah knows. Ain't no man can tell me about mah native game. Now roll 'em. Ah snaps fo' times for Lil Joe."

Monk sent the bones across the blanket. White's fingers clicked four times. Two deuces showed up.

"Ah said so!"

"Shoot the twenty," Monk announced in a quavering voice.

"An' ten mo' he wins," White chimed in. "Now roll 'em, boy. Give 'em a long roll so ah can get in 'leven snaps befo' dey stops."

A rattle of clicks accompanied the rolling bones. Two fives.

"Big Richard. Mah finguhs ain't lumbud up yet. Ah was one snap shote. Now

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Richard right back. Long roll—ten snaps —le's go."

Monk threw a ten.

And after that flying start, Monk soon forgot his nervous trepidation. The streak of luck that followed was beyond his wildest dreams. He won when he rolled, when he faded; on side bets. And so on throughout the afternoon. When they grew wary of him in one game he moved on to the next one.

He had made good his five-thousand-dollar whopper with Irene before the afternoon was half gone. He tucked the bottom of his jumper into his trousers at the waist, and crammed the money in at the neck. Nothing could stop him. He wallowed in luck.

At five o'clock, just as the bugler at the landing up the beach was making call-letters on the bugle—to inform men of the different ships what ship's boat was at the landing—Monk had finished counting his wealth.

"Ten thousand!" he jubilantly replied to the questioners in the returning boat. "Two weeks to do! Irene! Oh, boy!" he raved.

And glory followed upon glory. When he returned aboard he noted that smoke was belching from the stacks, booms were being rigged in and gear was being secured for sea. The *Abalone* had developed a leaky boiler, and had been ordered to proceed immediately to the navy-yard at Norfolk for repairs.

Norfolk! Ten thousand dollars; and Irene bound!

A WIRELESS operator lying sprawled over the desk with his face buried in his arms is not necessarily asleep on watch. He might be in that doubtful attitude for the reason that he is straining to hear distant weak signals, in which case it is well to shut off all distractive objects from his gaze, that he may better concentrate on the faint dots and dashes.

Monk Wilkins maintained stoutly that this was his most efficient weak-signal position. And George Delks, the radio chief, could only take Monk's word for it. Because every time he would "pop in" on him, thinking he had him, Monk would thrust up a warning hand, and at the same time hiss—"Shshsh!"

Then the upthrust hand would be lowered, ever so gradually, and go feeling over the desk for the pencil. A stretching and straining would follow. A word or two, perhaps a few disconnected letters Monk would scribble; after which he would sit up, heave a disappointed sigh and grumble:

"No use. Too far away. Can't copher."

Time and again, at all hours of the night Delks had slipped into the office and found Monk thus comfortably spread out over the desk. Once or twice, as he stealthily opened the door, he had heard sounds that were unmistakably snores. But never had he been able to get from the door over to the operator's desk quickly enough to verify his conviction. Monk always woke up. Not only did he always wake up at that very instant, but he was always ready with that sibilant "shshsh," and the sticking up of that warning right hand. Hence all Delks' getting up and "gumshoeing" at all hours of the night was just so much sleep lost and effort wasted.

Not that Delks was of that mean, "white mouse" variety. He was not "duty struck." Moreover, he had no personal dislike for Monk. It was merely the constant rankling within him of the thought of Monk "putting it over" on him, and "getting away with it," that kept him camping on Monk's trail.

There was something in Monk's eye that laughed at him—something that seemed to say—

"You big simp, I'm too much fox for you."

To take that silent laugh out of Monk's eyes was the only reason why Delks wanted to catch him. He had no desire to get Monk into trouble.

Personally, Delks thought Monk was nothing more than a hare-brained, irresponsible lunatic. He would be glad when the ship got to Norfolk, and Monk was paid off. It would be humiliating, though to let Monk slip out laughing. If he could only catch him just once, before the ship got in—merely to throw a good scare into him.

Thus Delks mused and speculated, as he hung on the rail one afternoon, three days after leaving Guantanamo Bay. The *Abalone* was plowing through that wide stormy zone east of Cape Hatteras, off the coast of North Carolina. Hanging there on the rail, gazing off into the wallow

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waste of white-spotted sea, Delks conceived an idea. A flexible imagination had Delks. The instant the idea flashed to him, he saw all its possibilities. The question was: What watch had Monk tonight?

"The mid watch tonight—the four to eight tomorrow—and then Irene! Oh, boy!" came a cackle at his side.

He turned and looked into the grinning face of Monk.

"You've got the mid tonight, eh? I suppose you're figuring on a good sleep."

Monk could lie—straight into a man's face, without batting an eye, he could lie.

"Me sleep on watch?" he snapped indignantly. "Never once since I've been in the outfit!"

Delks met his mocking gaze for a moment; then turned his back on him and walked away.

"The big stiff!" Monk rasped disdainfully. "He'd like to catch me napping. Soon as I get paid off I'm going to write him a letter and tell him how easy he was to slip it over on."

Monk then leaned over the rail and contemplated the water rushing by. He went dreaming into the golden future. How much of his ten thousand would be left after buying the furniture? Must be of the very highest grade and quality. Nothing cheap. No commonplace truck in the nest he was going to feather for Irene.

"Irene!" he rhapsodized.

She was a glorious gift of the gods. She made him think of the dazzling sun that burst up over the horizon out of clear blue sky on a clear bright day. He wondered what so resplendent a creature could possibly see in him. But then, he had ten thousand dollars; that would counterbalance some of his deficiencies.

And no more rum! His brain didn't need alcoholic stimulus any more. Ever since he had first looked into Irene's radiant, soul-stirring eyes, he had been the custodian of a continuous, heavenly "bun." But a jag it was without a headache, a sick stomach or a "dark-brown taste." An ever-present sensation of giddy buoyancy.

Delks! A mere speck of dust! He'd keep on watch tonight. Just once more. Merely to show that big dub how easy he has. Of course Delks would be up gumshoeing tonight. He'd get a silent "ha-ha" for his trouble.

"O MONK."

"Shshsh!" A hand stuck up out of the blankets.

"Aw, come out of it," said the impatient voice in his ear. "This ain't Delks. It's time to go on watch."

"Oh! All right, Smitty," Monk responded thickly; "be right up."

Five minutes later Monk put on the 'phones and took the watch.

"Much doing, Smitty?" he inquired as he lurched into the chair.

"Naw. Quiet as a graveyard."

"'Snice," said Monk. "Like to have things quiet. Don't like this jerky motion of the ship though. Makes it hard to get in a few good licks."

"If I was you, I wouldn't get in any licks tonight," warned the man going off watch. "I heard Delks telling a quartermaster to give him a call a little after twelve. You know——"

But Monk had already buried his head in his arms, and lay sprawled over the desk in his most efficient weak-signal position. His shipmate regarded him ruefully for a few moments; then with a shrug and a grin he went out.

Out of the radio office and straight up into the clouds, Monk soared. He went launching off into space illimitable. Stars, stars, stars—millions of stars dancing and scintillating everywhere. Irenes—everywhere millions of Irenes. Her angelic face smiled out of every star; her diamond eyes threw their dazzling rays in every direction; her bird-like laughter twittered and thrummed airy melodies into his delighted ears.

Floating, soaring, drifting. Flying! Came the realization that he had wings—great green wings. Five thousand dollars in each wing.

"A wing each—fifty-fifty," he chirped.

"Oh! You wonderful Dickie boy!" cooed the myriad Irenes. Monk was only his sea-going name. Richard, he had been baptized. Irene called him Dickie.

As he floated onward it occurred to him at length to look down. Far below he saw the dark human world. What a place that must be!

There was Delks, shaking his fist up at him.

"The big yap!"

Monk tittered giddily.

"Come back down here and stand your

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watch, you chronic idiot!" Delks yelled up.

"Come up here and make me," Monk quipped back down.

"Tell him to mind his own business, Dickie," called the indignant Irenes from all about him.

"Say, you big hay-hand, keep your ugly face out of our business. You don't belong up in these higher realms. You belong down, down, down in the other direction. What's that?"

"A ship is sending a message—it's urgent!"

"Well, don't I hear her, you big rope? I get it before you do. It has to come through the ether before you get it. Up here, I'm right in cahoots with the ether—part of it, you know—I get it direct, you see. Keep your bazoo shut for a minute, and I'll call it out to you.

"'Propeller shaft broken. Send assistance. Latitude thirty-four degrees, twenty minutes. Longitude sixty-four degrees, forty minutes.
Signed Master *Hawk*.'

"There, you big jackass! Is that good enough?"

"Come down here and write it out and send it to the skipper! That ship needs assistance!"

"She does, does she? Well—I can't be bothered. Is the *Albalone* the only ship on the ocean? Send it to the skipper! And lose out on Irene tomorrow night. If you think I will, you better see the doctor."

"You tell him, Dickie boy," came the angelic chorus.

And Monk continued floating on through ethereal space. There was that *Hawk's* operator repeating the message. Must be a ham on watch on the beach, that couldn't get that the first time!

"Why, I could copy that in my sleep!" he declared.

He wished those two hams would hurry up and clear. Between the buzz of that spark, and Delks' clattering, he could scarcely hear Irene.

DELKS scudded along the gun deck until he came to the radio-office door. The door was closed—he had expected that. The keyhole was stuffed—he had expected that too. Grasping the knob, he applied bare turning pressure—just enough to take up the tiny amount of loose play in the mechanism. A cat creeping up on a mouse would hav made more noise than he did in turni that knob. Practise makes perfect. Del was ultra-perfect at the trick of getti into that office without a sound. Also, t hinges and knob mechanism of that do he always kept well oiled.

He pushed the door inward at the ra of about an inch a minute. He thrust h head in, one leg, then the other—At leng he was inside. Holding his breath, stood there a few seconds gazing down up the sprawled-out figure of Monk. He cou swear he had made less noise than the falli of a soap-bubble. With the stealth a ghost, he started to raise one leg.

"Shshsh!" Up went that warning rig hand.

Delks tip-toed over. Monk lay over his left side. His left arm was wrapped and over his head, thus serving a twofo purpose—as a pillow, and as a means pressing the 'phones tight against his ea

Slowly the right hand was lowered ar as usual, went groping for the pencil. Del could see Monk's right eye only; it w tight shut.

Suddenly that right eye opened wi It rolled, until it was looking straight at him. For a full minute it looked at hi never blinking once. Not a sound Monk utter, nor a face muscle so much twitch; yet out of that unblinking eye hurled a tirade of contempt and ridic and mockery that all the grimaces of a c full of monkeys could not have express

Delks reached for the 'phones. Insta ly that right eye began to blink in ala The left arm, crooked over Monk's he pressed hard on the 'phones; while right hand commenced to push the pe industriously over the paper.

Delks hesitated in the act of snatch the 'phones, and watched what Monk scrawling. He read:

Propeller shaft broken. Send assistance. L tude thirty-four degrees, twenty minutes. L tude sixty-four degrees, forty minutes.
Signed Master *Haw*

Monk sat up with a sigh of satisfac and relaxation.

"You almost made me lose it," growled. "I lost the address as it is. you'd been quiet——"

"Quiet?"

"Yes, quiet! How do you expect a

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to copy signals so weak he can hardly hear 'em, with you tramping on the deck like a ton of brick?"

Delks regarded him with narrowing eyes for a moment; then he reached over and picked up the message.

"He just finished sending this?" he questioned.

Monk swung round in the chair and faced him squarely.

"Don't you usually copy a message as it's being sent to you?" he countered sarcastically.

"Sure. I do," affirmed Delks. "But I'm only an ordinary ham, Monk. A real operator—one like you—copies behind; some fellows can copy four and five words behind."

Monk's brow contracted. Something in the tone and the evasive reply of the other made him feel uncomfortable. He watched a grin mount to Delks' face as he read the message over. Doubt assailed him. Had he actually heard that message in his sleep? Or had he only dreamed it? He could swear he had heard it. It was not the first time he had heard a message in his sleep. Sometimes when he awakened from one of these stolen naps, he would remember several messages he had heard—remember every word. Yes; the message must have been sent. But what could Delks be driving at?—copy behind—?

"I don't get you, chief," he said finally.

But Delks seemed to be pondering deeply on something else.

"Were you figuring on turning this in?" he asked abruptly.

"Why not?"

"Well—if the skipper gets this message, we'll suddenly find ourselves changing course and heading out to sea. Incidentally, we won't get to Norfolk tomorrow. We may be a week getting in—no telling. For my own part, I've got a cute little trick of a dame waiting for me. How about Irene? Did you ever see anything gained by delay?—in the matrimonial line? Don't you think——"

"I get you!" Monk broke in.

In the flight of a second, all his malignity toward Delks dropped from him. He had never given Delks credit for so much thinking power. Delay was bad business! Not that he doubted Irene's loyalty—she was too thoroughly a thoroughbred to hand a fellow an unexpected jolt like that. And yet, women did strange things, at strange times, in strange ways.

"Now here's the way I size up this proposition," Delks went on: "Assistance is, no doubt, already on the way to this ship. We'd probably be too late if we did go heading out to her. Yet the old man will certainly head out if he sees this message. It would be a different thing if she were sinking. But she's merely got a broken shaft—can't move until some one comes along and slips her a tow-line. What do you say we ditch the message?"

Monk strongly favored the suggestion. In fact, he never would have turned the message in. He did not know for a certainty that it had been sent. He had written it down on the spur of the moment. With Delks about to snatch the 'phones from him, he had to write something; so he wrote what was still buzzing in his ears—what he had heard in his dream.

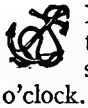
"Of course," he said finally, "if I thought the ship really needed our assistance; and if I didn't know that assistance is on the way——"

"I'm beginning to think you've got sense," said Delks, as he crumpled the message into his pocket.

"Just what I was thinking about you," Monk retorted.

"Not a word, Monk," cautioned Delks at the door.

"Not a word! Do you think I want to flirt with a general court martial? With Irene a day away? And ten thousand bucks stashed?"



MONK did not again go to sleep on that watch. Nor was he able to sleep after he came off watch at four o'clock. There was a constant gnawing within him, a conviction that all was not well. And although, having had the mid watch, he rated sleeping in till six bells, or seven o'clock, he turned out at reveille, lashed and stowed his hammock, and went back into the radio-office.

"What's the dope, Stover?" he asked of the operator on watch.

"That's all," replied Stover sleepily, pointing to a typewritten message on the desk to one side. "Didn't turn it in yet," he added. "Didn't think it was in any hurry."

Monk's vision grew blurred as he read:

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Govt. U. S. S. *Abalone.*
Did you intercept message from S. S. *Hawk* to Arlington at twelve-thirty am. date 05025.
Secnav.

Here it was! He knew it! Now for the music! Slow music it would be—for Monk. What could he do? What would Irene——

"Just got it," said Stover drowsily. "Suppose you take it up to the officer of the deck for me?"

An apt suggestion. Sure; he would take it to Delks, which he did.

Delks yawned as he shook him.

" 'Smatter, Monk?" he grunted thickly.

"Look at this. Secnav is up early this morning."

"Well, what about it?" asked Delks, after reading the message.

"What about it? Why, that message I gave you on the mid watch."

Delks sat straight up and stared at him.

"What in —— are you raving about?"

"Aw, come on, chief—no kiddin'. You've got the message—the ship with the broken shaft. Stover just got this from Arlington. I told him I'd take it up to the O. O. D. What'll I do?"

"I haven't been out of this bunk since nine o'clock last night," Delks announced positively.

Monk stared incredulously. Then it dawned on him that the other was in earnest. So that was the game! Delks was going to "pass the buck" to him.

"What'll you do?" Delks continued. "Why, take it up to the O. O. D., of course." Saying which, he reached out and put his palm to Monk's forehead. "Feel feverish?"

Monk recoiled.

"Do you mean it?"

Delks continued to stare blankly.

Monk backed out of the chief petty officers' quarters and went up on deck to think.

If he delivered this message to the officer of the deck, it would go to the commanding officer, who would immediately reply:

"No. No record of anything from *Hawk* to Arlington."

Then what? Why, slow music, of course —for Monk. Why did he NOT? etc. The officer of the deck must not get the message.

Right there Monk's guilty conscience was his undoing. There are always numerous reasons for a message going over an operator's head. Had he given the matter only a little consideration—put himself in the position of having actually not heard the *Hawk's* message—he would have seen that there was no cause for apprehension. He could have easily answered away the few "Why did you NOTS?"

But the fact was he had received the message and had not turned it in. He was guilty. He had committed, not merely a breach of discipline or violation of regulations, but a crime—on the high seas, an unpardonable crime. He had turned a deaf ear to a ship calling for help!

Delks was to blame! Had Delks not come gum-shoeing in, Monk would have, after finishing his sleep, called the *Hawk* and asked for a verification of the message. It was on Delks' suggestion that the message had been "ditched." But all that didn't help him now, as he sat upon a chest in a quiet corner of the gun-deck, wondering what to do. Delks had washed his hands of the affair; he must fight it out himself.

An interrogation from the secretary of the navy must be replied to. Monk pondered. He thrashed things out to a nicety. Secnav would get his reply. He would reply to it himself. Easy enough. He had only to relieve Stover for breakfast, when he could shoot it through. No one would be any the wiser. Having thus decided Monk threw Secnav's message out through a port, and then settled back to wait till breakfast time.

But when he offered to relieve Stover he encountered an undercurrent he had not expected.

"Sure; I want to eat, all right," said Stover; "but Delks was just in, and says not to let you take the watch any more. Says he wants the doctor to see you first. What's it all about, Monk?"

Monk's blood was up now. So Delks had anticipated him! Monk, too, had a flexible imagination. Immediately he set about devising ways and means. On the desk lay several pads of message blanks. Watching his opportunity, he slipped one of these under his jumper unobserved.

A few minutes later, down below in a remote passageway, he wrote on one of the blanks:

Govt. Bunav. Washington.
Secnav's 05025. No. Intercepted nothing from *Hawk*. 07325. *Abalone.*

This he delivered to the radio-office, and laid before Stover.

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"Officer of the deck's messenger was just bringing that aft," he said carelessly. "Told him I'd deliver it. Wants it to go right, '*pronto.*'"

"All right," Stover replied. "But Arlington's busy right now. Have to wait a while."

Monk then went to breakfast, highly pleased with himself, and more than ever of the opinion that Delks would make good shark bait.

STOVER told Monk after breakfast that the message had gone through.

That was Monk's day of days. After bolting the morning offering of beans, he went up on the bridge and requested permission from the officer of the deck to speak to the executive officer. He wanted, he told the officer of the deck, to request that he be discharged as soon as the ship got in.

"Account of sick people home, sir," he said. The truth was that he wanted to sign clear of the navy before the reaction on that *Hawk* message came.

Having been granted permission, he had nothing to do till ten o'clock, when the executive officer held "mast" for requests. Nothing to do but watch what came through by radio. And so, seated on a ditty box outside the radio-office door, Monk settled down to a watchful waiting siege.

At nine o'clock, Smitty, who had the eight to twelve watch, came out of the office and started forward leisurely. In his hand he carried a message. Monk sprang up and after him.

"What's the dope, Smitty?"

"Looks like the rope going around somebody's neck," was Smitty's cheering reply. "How's to take it up to the O. O. D., will you?"

Saying which, Smitty started back to the office, leaving Monk standing there reading:

Govt. U. S. S. *Abalone.*
Your 07325. Give reasons why operator did not intercept *Hawk's* message. 08325. Secnav.

"Joe" was not the easy-going secretary of the navy he was reputed to be. Joe could show his teeth. Monk retracted then and there all the nice flowery things he had said about Joe. "05025," the time and reference number of Secnav's first message, told him it had been filed at five A.M. What could a man occupying so exalted a seat be doing up and prowling around at that hour?

At any rate, Secnav wanted "reasons"; reasons he would get. Monk would finish what he had begun. Already he had done enough to get himself dangled from the yard-arm. Joe was evidently after some one's scalp—it would not be Monk's. He'd answer Joe, message for message. If it came to a show-down—the Virginia coast was in sight on the port hand—he could swim.

Noting the reference number of the message, Monk crumpled it up and flipped it out through a port. Then he proceeded to the remote passageway below, drew the pad of blanks from under his jumper and wrote:

Govt. Bunav. Washington.
Secnav's 08325. Operator states did not hear *Hawk's* message probably because he was trying to receive distant weak signals on long wavelength. 09325. *Abalone.*

This he laid before Smitty a few minutes later, saying that the officer of the deck had given it to him.

"Arlington's busy right now," informed Smitty. "I'll get it through later. Who's all this slow music on? you, Monk?"

"Yes. I'm the goat."

"Sure hard luck," sympathized Smitty. "Just when you was about to get paid off, too."

"I can't be worried," Monk returned, with an indifference he was far from feeling.

"But say, Smitty," he added abruptly—"you'll do me a favor if you'll let me see all the dope that comes, before you chase it up to the O. O. D. Will you do that? Kinda give me a stand-by, eh?"

"I'll sure do that," responded Smitty, who then bent suddenly over the desk with a "shshsh."

Monk tiptoed out. Things would no doubt shape out all right. This would be something to tell Irene about: How he slipped it over on the secretary of the navy, the captain of the ship, Delks—He was beginning to enjoy it. All he had to do was to grab every message that came and keep the officer of the deck from getting it. He could continue replying to each one himself.

Meanwhile, he'd pull on the official wires and see if he could get paid off as soon as the ship got in. Already his versatile mind had been active framing his reasons for

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requesting immediate discharge—his father and mother were both very aged and in failing health; his sister at the point of death; a brother who had lost both arms under Dewey at Manila—nothing to it!

MONK emerged from his interview with the executive officer serene and smiling.

"Very well, Wilkins," had the benign commander replied. "There is no reason why you can't be paid off ahead of time. We'll discharge you as soon as we get in. Are you coming back to ship over with us? —after you've been home to see all these sick folks?"

"Yes, sir. You bet, sir," Monk gushed. "No other ship but this for me, sir."

"Very well." The executive officer then turned to his yeoman: "Get all his papers ready." And again addressing Monk: "We'll be in the roads about three this afternoon. Then as soon as the quarantine officer grants us pratique, we shall run right on in to the yard. So get your bag and hammock all ready."

"What could be better than that?" was his exulting thought, as he went back to his vigil at the radio-office door.

He bumped right into Delks, who was coming out of the office. Again Delks reached out and essayed to press his palm against Monk's forehead. Everything turned crimson-red to Monk as he backed away. It was a good thing for Delks that he held the fleet middle-weight belt. Even at that, Monk had a well-nigh irresistible desire to "plant one" between his eyes, and run.

"Did the doctor send for you yet?" Delks inquired.

"What for?"

"Why—well, you see," Delks faltered, "I spoke to him about your—well—nervous condition. But he'll tell you all about it. He said he'd look you over."

And after imparting this enlightening information, Delks passed on aft.

"The dirty, slippery snake!" Monk rasped inwardly. "To clear himself of the ditching of the *Hawk's* message, he's gone and told the doctor I'm loony."

The worst of it was, if he should be sent for to report to the doctor, a message might slip through during his absence. So long as he could stand a close watch at the radio-office door, he could grab and reply to every message. But let one message get through to the officer of the deck, and Monk might as well swim.

He had no more than seated himself on the ditty box when Smitty came out with another message, and started forward. Up bounced Monk and after him.

"More sobs, Smitty?"

"Yeh. Josephus wants to know what wave-length you was on," Smitty informed him, handing him the message.

Monk read:

Govt. U. S. S. *Abalone.*
Your 09325. On what wave-length was operator listening? 10025. Secnav.

"Now, tell you what, Monk," said Smitty. "When you give this to the officer of the deck, and he asks you what wave-length you was on—tell him about four-thousand meters. That'll clear you. 'Cause all these commercial ships work on six-hundred meters. And if you had your set tuned to receive four-thousand-meter signals, you had no chance of hearing anything on six-hundred meters."

Five minutes later Monk brought Smitty another message. It read:

Govt. Bunav. Washington.
Secnav's 10025. On four-thousand meters. 10325. *Abalone.*

The mess-cooks were getting down the tables for dinner, when Smitty came out with the next message.

"Sure looks like heavy weather for you, Monk, old-timer," said Smitty dolefully, as he handed Monk the message. "Sure sorry. Delks is taking the watch at noon," he flung back over his shoulder.

This message did look like heavy weather.

Govt. U. S. S. *Abalone.*
Your 10325. *Hawk* sent message on four-thousand meters. Give name and rate of operator on watch. 11325. Secnav.

He couldn't quit now! There was but one thing to do. One more message he delivered to Smitty to be sent.

Govt. Bunav. Washington.
Secnav's 11325. Richard M. Wilkins, electrician, first-class, radio. 12025. *Abalone.*

Monk then took a chance on going to dinner. What worried him now was that Delks was taking the afternoon watch. Would Delks allow him to continue playing

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the messenger? There was no telling what Delks might do.

AFTER dinner Monk once more took his post on the ditty box, having shifted it outboard to a point from which he could look in through the office door. He saw Smitty turning over the watch to Delks. Both were laughing. Finally Delks put on the 'phones and sat down. He sat with his back toward the door, hence Monk could not see his face; but a frequent shimmying of the shoulders told Monk that Delks was fitfully enjoying something funny.

Suddenly Delks straightened up to attention.

"Here comes one," thought Monk, as he watched Delks' left hand reach out and make an adjustment on the receiving set, while his right hand pressed on the remote-control button. After a few seconds Delks slammed down the antenna switch. Monk heard a hissing K—meaning GO AHEAD. Delks then swung round to the typewriter, and commenced punching out the message.

After acknowledging its receipt, Delks sat there for what seemed an age to Monk, studying the message in the typewriter.

At length, unable to endure the suspense any longer, Monk got up and went over to the door.

"Got anything to go up to the bridge, chief?" he called in.

Delks looked around quickly.

"Come here," he said. And as Monk entered: "Shut the door—lock it." Then, indicating the message in the typewriter: "Now read this."

Monk read:

Govt. U. S. S. *Abalone.*
Place Richard M. Wilkins under arrest, pending investigation. Designate board of three officers to inquire into details, and ascertain why Wilkins failed to copy message from steamship to *Hawk* Arlington at twelve-thirty this morning. 12325.
Secnav.

"What was this *Hawk* message about, Monk?" asked Delks innocently. "Or don't you know?"

Monk glared at him.

"Have you got the face to sit there and ask me that?"

Delks swept him with a knowing glance.

"That's one way out of it," he hinted, nodding. "I've got to hand it to you, Monk—you're a good actor. When you woke me up this morning you certainly had me convinced that you were loony. But the question is, Monk: Will you be able to put that over on the doctor?"

A muddled mass of ideas swirled about in Monk's brain. Predominantly impelling was the longing to wring Delks' neck. He felt that he held the advantage of position—Delks being seated and he standing; and that, if he once got his fingers around Delks' neck, with his thumbs digging in at the throat, he could compel the other to say "Uncle." But Reason spoke up within—

"Don't be rash, Monk!" she warned. "You're still two hours from the navy-yard."

He tried to speak; but a few incoherent utterances were the best his tongue and voice would deliver.

"Of course," Delks went on evenly, "you can do as you please. Play loony—if you think you can hang it over on the doctor."

"I'm not playing loony!" Monk frothed. "I'm not loony. And —— well you know it!"

Delks shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well—might as well let every man play his own hand." He took the message out of the typewriter, laid the carbon copy to one side, and stood up. "I'll have to get this up to the officer of the deck."

"Let me take it up." Monk reached for it eagerly.

"I've got a picture of you handing this to the officer of the deck," said Delks, with a significant grin. "You're all set to get paid off in a couple of hours, too, eh?"

"I'll make it worth your while," Monk persisted.

Delks hesitated in the act of turning the door key.

"How much?"

"What's it worth?" Monk countered adroitly.

"More than you've got, Monk, I'm afraid. You know, Monk, money isn't much good to a poor devil in prison. I'd be taking a pretty long chance. No telling what they might hand me for a stunt like that—might stretch me up to the yard-arm by the neck, till I was dead, dead, dead. What good would money be to me then? I might——"

"Five thousand smacks!" Monk interrupted.

Delks laughed softly.

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"Think of the risk, Monk!"

"You can say you gave me the message to deliver. I'll be gone. Seven thousand!"

"Yes; you'll be gone! But I'll be here! Of course, that don't worry you once you're over the gangway. Gave it to you to deliver, eh? Sounds good—to you. I don't think that scheme will hold water."

Monk begged. Eight thousand—nine thousand, he offered. Delks continued to shake his head. Monk fumed, threatened; and still Delks grinned.

"I'm sure sorry, Monk; but I don't think it can be done," he said, reaching out again toward the door-key.

"Wait a minute, Delks." Monk was desperate. "I'll give you ten thousand. That'll leave me with less than a hundred dollars to go out with."

Delks recrossed the office.

"That's a go," he said with sudden decision. "Decorate this desk with ten thousand disks, and I'll hold up this message till you get paid off and over the gangway. How long is it going to take you to produce this ten thousand?"

"No longer than it takes me to go to the pay-office and back," Monk replied. "Paymaster's got my roll in safe-keeping for me."

"Get it," Delks spat out. "I'll hold this message just fifteen minutes."

"Be shipmate enough to slice off one hundred dollars," Monk entreated. "Leave me enough to buy a civilian outfit."

"Shipmates all went down on the Maine," was the sardonic reply. "Ten thousand aces, you said. Not nine-thousand nine-hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents, but ten-thousand dollars! Better make it gingery—fifteen minutes."

IT WAS a despondent Monk that crossed the gangway late that afternoon and made for the navy-yard gate. He saw no roses blooming along the bleak road that stretched away into the future. Sixty dollars, he had; enough to buy a scanty outfit of cheap clothes. A railroad ticket for home was not to be even thought of. And being bumped on the rods, all the way from Norfolk to Indiana, was anything but a pleasing anticipation.

It had been hard to smile as he said good-by to the boys; but he had managed to maintain the front. One thing had given him a little satisfaction: Delks had already gone ashore. He had dreaded having to say good-by to him. Never again did he want to see that dirty sneak's face.

Rocks and shoals and gloom in the future: dreams and visions that had been but bubbles in the past—such was life.

He stood outside the navy-yard gate and glared down upon the gutter.

The gutter! Where liars, fools and visionaries finished. And he had been all of these.

Irene! Another of his bubble-like dreams. There wasn't a bare possibility of her caring to see him now. Suppose he went to her and told her that he had been a liar; that he was a rank failure; that the dream was over; good-by——

"De Lawd giveth, an' de Lawd taketh away," came to his ears.

He looked up to behold White, the big mess attendant who had snapped fingers for him in the game, days before, crossing the street.

"Been watchin' yo' from dat poolroom window across de street," informed his midnight-hued shipmate. "Yo's right. Dat what you was thinkin' of playin' right dese las' few minutes—dat's yo play. Foller dat hunch. Yo's right."

"How do you figure?"

"Ah don't figuh; ah knows. How did ah figuh yo was right in de game down in 'Tanamo other day? Was no mathematitionizin' about it; ah knowd."

"You think I'm right today, eh?"

"Ain't said nothing about thinkin'. Furthermore ain't got no time to argumentate 'cause ah got to get some grub ingredients fo de officers' mess." White spat a long squirt of tobacco juice into the street, winding it up with, "Yo's right."

He then turned abruptly on his heel and stalked off down the street.

"I can't say I think *you're* right," Monk flung after him.

Nevertheless he was unable to curb the ungovernable desire which White's suggestion to "foller dat hunch" had awakened in him. And following that hunch took him to Irene's house.

AN ADORABLE little creature of charm and smiles was Irene as she opened the door to him. What a liar and a cheat Life was! He might gaze and admire and be fascinated; but he must neither covet nor hope, for he could not

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possess. Monk kept his eyes fixed on the carpet.

"I can't stop," he began brokenly. "I just came to say good-by; and to tell you that I was a liar about that five thousand dollars." And once started, Monk rambled on wildly. "I'm not worth the dynamite it would take to blow me to where I belong. You're better off clear of me. I had ten thousand dollars this morning—that's all a dream now. The whole thing was a dream! I'm awake now. And she's a tough old world. I can't ship over in the navy; I left too much mud behind. I'm going west on the rods this evening."

He paused for a moment. She stared in bewilderment.

"You can't imagine how sorry I am," he went on. "You were a straight shooter with me. I——"

"But wait a minute," she finally broke in. "I don't know what you are talking about. Come into the parlor. A friend of yours is here. He has been here over an hour."

"Friend of mine! Ain't no sech animal," Monk mumbled, as he stepped through the parlor door. The next instant he stood glaring into the grinning face of Delks!

"You dirty ——"

"Choke it," Delks cut in.

"But what's the idea?"

"Why—Monk, old nut, I got all the way out to the navy-yard gate before I happened to think I hadn't said good-by to you. Thought about going back; but then I remembered this young lady's address—you never minded telling everybody where she lived, you know. And so, I drifted over here and waited for you."

"Well—here I am—good-by," snapped Monk.

"Exit the villain, leaving Monk and the young lady, and then the curtain falls, eh?" said Delks, laughing. "But that's not the way it winds up, Monk. The villain will depart in a few minutes. You know, Monk, I've got a cute little trick of a dame in this town myself. I've already burned an hour and a half of broad daylight, for the mere purpose of satisfying a curiosity. It's all lovely, as far as I can see.

"But—" Delks paused and looked at Irene. "Pardon me, miss, but I'm —— if I know what you see in him. All I can say for him is that he's a rattling good operator. Good! He can operate when he's sound asleep!

"Know what I did?" Delks continued, bending over and opening out a suitcase that lay on the floor. "I took this buzzer practising set—" He brought forth an apparatus consisting of a battery, buzzer and telegraph sending-key—all mounted on a board.

"Last night I took this little sending set and hooked it to the 'rat-tail'—the wire leading from the antenna down into the radio-office, understand? I hooked in from the upper deck, follow me?—and sent a message to this monkey, who was on watch.

"He was sound asleep. But he got the message; every word of it! That's why I say—no matter how loony he may be in other ways—he's some operator. The reason I know he was asleep is because he didn't copy the message till twenty minutes after I'd sent it to him!"

Monk wilted into a chair.

"I always knew he did a lot of sleeping on watch. But he always had a happy knack of waking up every time I snuck up on him. Last night, twenty minutes after I'd sent him this message, I cat-footed up behind him. As usual, he woke up—there was no getting into that office without waking him up. 'Shshsh,' he whispers, and pretends to be straining to hear weak signals. Then to keep me from calling his hand—by taking the phones from him—he starts in to write. He wrote the message I'd sent him twenty minutes before from the upper deck!"

A groan came from Monk in the chair.

"And you should have seen him rear up on his dignity, when I asked him if the message had just been sent!"

Delks sat down and, holding the buzzer set in his lap, commenced tapping on the key.

"Sound like the *Hawk's* spark, Monk?" And then to Irene—

"All day long he's been going round and round with the secretary of the navy."

Monk was game enough to twist his face into a very painful grin.

At length Delks replaced the apparatus in the suit-case, which he then carried over and deposited in Monk's lap, saying:

"All those Secnav messages are in here, Monk, old fish. Keep 'em, along with this

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buzzer set, to remember Delks, Stover and Smitty by. Teach Irene the code. Then you can keep in practise. Your money is in here, too. As I said before, I've been here an hour and a half. You see, Monk, old owl, I figured you were just chicken brained enough to turn loose of that ten thousand to some—see what I mean?"

And before Monk could recover his speech, Delks had made a sweeping bow, said good-by, and was gone.

A FEW days later, looking up from a letter he had received from Monk—

"Listen to this," said Delks to Stover and Smitty.

Aloud he read:

" . . . sure was mighty big of you, old shipmate. I'll never again dislike a man before I know him. . . .

Speaking about buzzers—look under the desk, away in back, and see what I had hooked into the 'darken-ship' circuit. Then you'll know why I could always wake up. . . . "

A few words will explain this. The radio-office door opened and closed on a push-button, set in the bulkhead next to the hinge edge of the door. This arrangement was for opening and closing the lighting circuit of the office, with the opening and closing of the door, when steaming under darkened-ship conditions, during war games, etc. Opening the door put out the lights.

Monk connected a small testing buzzer in series with this "darken-ship" circuit and the telephone circuit of the receiving set. So that, when the door opened, he got a loud buzz in the 'phones.

THE SWORD OF THE PROPHET

By Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

Author of "The Doom of the Gods," "Before Midnight," etc.

A LOYAL heart, a keen brain, and a stout sword-arm—these make a great captain. When all three are found in one man, *messires*, that man acquires fame and his lord's love, and is on the road to greatness.

Such a man was my captain, Pierre Faidit. Me? Bah! I am a spearman, and, as you see, something of a minstrel. Jehan the Big, men call me. But I was talking of Pierre. Let me strum a few notes as I talk, *messires*. I am not like the strolling vagabonds who sing lying tales. I saw the deeds of which I tell; aye, and had a hand in them.

Pierre was as much bigger than I as I am than yonder kitchen-knave; and you see I am of great stature. Ah, the breadth of his shoulders! The great chest of him, made for endurance! His arms, that could crack my ribs in one squeeze! And he was as handsome as he was strong. I have seen a face like his, with its broad brow and hooked nose, on a coin that the Romans minted.

His eyes were dark and piercing; his white teeth showed in a merry smile that won the heart; his cheeks, dark like mine, had the rose of a woman's under their sun-browned olive. He could talk like a

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priest—aye, and read like one, *pardieu!* For our master, Count Alphonse-Jourdain the Great of Toulouse, had him taught letters. And, St. Michael the Champion! How Pierre could fight! God help the man who crossed swords with him!

It was in 1133 that Count Alphonse found him, a mere fisher lad, in a dirty hole of a coast village, called Cap Estang. He was a fine boy, though but fourteen, with the promise of mighty strength. We came upon him fighting four lads, each as old as he; and the count's eyes gleamed at the sight of his great shoulders and smooth muscles. My lord took him and made a soldier of him.

Well did he repay the count's favor. For eight years he labored, drilled, and toiled to learn the trade of the sword. Yes, he learned more—the *art* of the sword; for he became the first swordsman of the South. Those great eyes of his were always open, always questioning; storing knowledge which he was one day to use to save our master, and Toulouse itself.

Eight years after, he was appointed captain of the south gate. It was then that his skill with his weapon, and his great wisdom, first won his fame. By a cunning stratagem he drove off King Louis VII and the French army from our gates, and took the King with his own hand.

Not a year went by without some great deed from his hand; and in all these, my masters, I had some small share. For I was stationed at Pierre's gate, and bore its banner. In 1145 he captured the impregnable castle of Tarascon, though he was a prisoner in its dungeons. In that castle he first met his dearest friend, Cercamon the troubadour.

If any man in the South could rival Pierre Faidit, whether with the sword or in the cunning of his brain, it was Cercamon. Every court in France knew Cercamon, whose voice could lure the very angels of heaven to listen, whose weapon pierced every guard, whose guile was deep as the sea. When he first met my captain, they fought, yet neither triumphed. For Pierre was struck down from behind by a dog of a spearman; and that same night Cercamon was forced to leave Tarascon. For almost a year he knew not that Pierre still lived. But the memory of that fight made them friends.

Pierre lived, and triumphed. He seized Tarascon from its bandit ruler by a ruse; and by that deed he outwitted Cercamon's plans for getting Tarascon for his own master, Raymond-Bérenger IV, Count of Barcelona. Now this Bérenger was my lord Alphonse's enemy. A fair foe, not like the she wolf of Aquitaine, the wicked Queen of France.

When Pierre next met Cercamon—and it is of this, *messires*, that I would tell you—their meeting was fraught with fate. By then Pierre was as well known as Cercamon, having wrought so many noble strokes with sword and brain that he was spoken of even in Italy. The lords who envied my master would have paid any price for his services; but he was not to be bought. He loved Alphonse-Jourdain, who also loved him.

Now I saw not all these things of which I speak, for I am but a sergeant. Some I saw, some I had from hearsay, and the rest from René the Clerk, the count's secretary. René was close-mouthed most of the time; but he loved the dice, and owed so much to me that he dared not hide from me that which I wished to know. He knew he could count on my secrecy, for I too loved my master. It will do no hurt to tell it now, for Alphonse the Great, alas! is dead; and Pierre is in England. When shall I see him more?

It was in May of 1146. Ah, where is May sweeter than on the vine-clad hills of Toulouse? The land was bright with sunshine and the fresh, new green, the songs of the birds were echoed by the voices of men-at-arms chanting on the battlements. Winter was gone, and all men rejoiced in the sun. Hopes rose with the sap, and budded with the flowers.

In this season Alphonse-Jourdain held court on the terrace outside the postern, where the grass grew thick and green, with the first roses breaking into bloom, and the castle heights ran down to the rolling slopes and the plains of the broad, blue Garonne.

My lord sat, that day, at a table beside the fountain, with the three he trusted most. You have seen the count—you remember his great, well-knit body, still agile for all his three-and-forty Winters. You recall his bold hawk-features, his fierce gray eyes. Though at an age when most men are in life's Winter, he was as lean and strong as in that stormy youth

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which saw his first successes on the fields of Palestine.

On one side of him sat—for he made companions of these men, though they were his vassals—René the Clerk, a lean youth in black, whose white fingers played with a roll of parchment marked with neat figures and notations in a fair round hand. On his other hand was old Simon, master of the garrison, a straight-backed veteran with a rough, scarred face. Opposite the count, you may be sure, sat Pierre Faidit, my captain; for him Alphonse trusted most. Nor was his confidence ever deceived.

Pierre—so René has told me—was speaking with an eloquence that kept hands, shoulders, and eyebrows moving. He was of the Languedoc, with all the liveliness of that fair land. His years were seven-and-twenty, and he was merry as a child when no one crossed him. But he was not merry now.

The count listened to every word he said, as men did when Pierre spoke. Aye, Alphonse listened, nodding at every sentence, with pursed lips and glinting eyes. When he finished, the count said:

"You convince, Pierre; but so do René's figures. Look at them again!"

Taking the scroll from the clerk's hand, he passed it across the table to Pierre; who, perusing it swiftly, tossed it back to the clerk with an air of contempt. His brows knitted; he sprang up, his dark eyes flaming.

"My lord," he cried, "I have heard that at each man's side stand two angels, one from heaven, the other in the devil's livery. These note all his deeds. When he chooses the right course, the white angel smiles, and makes a mark to his credit in God's judgment book; when he chooses the path of shame, the black angel exults, and adds another check to the long tally of the man's sins.

"Those angels stand at your shoulder now, waiting breathless for your decision. If you let René's figures sway you, there will be joy tonight in the bottomless pit!"

My lord's eyes held Pierre's steadily.

"You use hard words," he said.

My captain answered the look rather than the speech. "You do well to rebuke me, *seignior*. It was no way to speak to one so high, and I but a peasant who owe everything to your favor. None the less my words are true. René's accounts show that your coffers are nearly empty with the expense of maintaining a great garrison, and you can not diminish your forces without inviting attack from your enemies in Barcelona or Aquitaine.

"But if you replenish your wealth from the King's bounty, on the terms he exacts, you will lose that which is more precious than gold or life—your honor! And you will do more; you will bring the wrath of the Church, and its curse, upon this devoted land of Toulouse!"

"What think you, Simon?"

Alphonse turned to the master of the garrison.

The veteran grunted.

"I hold with Pierre," he answered bluntly. "All your life you have kept your honor stainless, and it would be an ill thing to sully it now."

"And you, René?"

The clerk looked down at his pointed shoes.

"I have but cast the reckoning as you bade me, my lord. I am no soldier, and know little of honor; but I fear the Church!"

Alphonse-Jourdain rose, and the others rose with him.

"So be it!" he smiled. "I would have said the same myself; but I owed it to you to ask your counsel. None of you has received his pay for three months."

"—— take the pay!" cried Simon. "We serve you from choice!"

Pierre said no word, but he seized Simon's hand; and René, who feared the Church indeed, gave a gasp of relief.

Now all this stir, *messires*, was caused by King Louis' quarrel with the Pope. Louis VII had it in his mind to make himself both temporal and spiritual ruler of France, and rashly defied his Holiness, Eugenius III. The blessed Bernard of Clairvaux, by urgent and humble intercession, for a time succeeded in holding off the ban of excommunication from France; but it would come as soon as Louis made an open move. All France lived in fear.

The King, purposing to meet the ban with force of arms, sent to each of his nobles an appeal to defend the Crown; and to our lord of Toulouse he offered ten thousand marks, if Alphonse would join his banner. This sum would have made the count rich once more; but as you have seen, he and his most trusted men preferred honor and their souls' salvation to money.

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Now, the matter being settled, the count turned away; but before he could leave the terrace, two men came through the postern gate, between the steel-clad men-at-arms who stood guard there. One of the newcomers was a man of the garrison; the other a strange priest in cowl and gown. He was a dark-faced, lithe fellow, whose features had none of the humility which should grace God's servants. He bore a roll of parchment in his hand.

For a moment he stared from one to another of the group by the table, his gaze lingering a moment on the proud young face of Pierre; then his eyes shifted to the count. Bowing low, he placed his scroll in the great man's fingers.

ALPHONSE broke the seal and began to read, scowling as he ran down the lines. Though he could read—having realized, from his youth, the value of that learning which most nobles scorn—he did not boast a clerk's proficiency. The priest, meantime, stood by silent and motionless, as if waiting for the count to finish. Suddenly Alphonse cried out in anger. He stepped aside from the others, and half-turned his back, to get better light on the manuscript, which had been darkened by the frowning shadow of the wall.

Even as he turned away, the priest sprang, a knife glittering in his uplifted hand. The blade descended—it gleamed at the count's neck. In that instant a second flash leaped above it; the knife dropped harmlessly, and the priest screamed. Straightway the guardsmen hurled themselves upon him and held him, though he struggled furiously. Blood spurted from the stump of his right wrist. His knife, clutched in the fingers of his severed hand, lay at the count's feet. There was blood spattered in drops over the scroll that Alphonse still held. Seeing the wretch powerless, Pierre Faidit wiped his streaming sword on a fold of the priest's gown, and crossed himself.

Recovering from his surprize, Alphonse flung the half-read scroll to René.

"Once more I owe you a debt greater than I can pay, Pierre," he said. "Jacques and Arnolt, bind up this fellow's wound and throw him into the dungeon! Send for the Prior of St. Sernin. When he comes, put the priest to the question!"

The soldiers hustled their prisoner away; and as they dragged him through the postern, he cast back upon Alphonse a look of bitter hate.

"Now read me this scroll, René!" the count commanded.

The clerk obeyed, while the others listened. Signed by Raymond-Bérenger of Barcelona, whose jealousy had long menaced Toulouse, its message was an insolent demand that Alphonse surrender to Bérenger his province of Foix.

"This is shameless!" the count burst out. "Has he not already intrigued against me with my own vassal, Roger of Foix? Dares he think that I will give up that county which is the very barbican of Toulouse, for fear of him?"

Pierre's strong fingers played with the hilt of his great sword.

"The time is ripe for such a stroke," he said. "Bérenger wants Foix. He knows of the King's quarrel with the Pope; knows, too, that you—like all the other nobles—must join with King or Pope. Soon all France will be ablaze with war between Church and Crown. Bérenger waits only to see which side you will help. When he learns that you uphold the Church, he will join the King, and send his armies against Toulouse. His father-in-law, the King of Aragon, will aid him; and to punish you, King Louis of France will lend him money or troops."

"But Louis has sworn never to take up arms against me again!" Alphonse protested.

"He will be forced to break his oath, to prevent your eight thousand veterans from swelling the armies of the Church. Only a miracle can save France from civil war now. We shall be ground to pieces between Bérenger and the King."

Alphonse held up one hand.

"Then why," he asked, "if Bérenger is so sure of destroying me in the honest warfare, does he send this cutthroat priest to murder me?"

Here René's soft voice broke in. He was studying the priest's manuscript.

"I am not sure," he observed hesitatingly, "that this is the true seal of Barcelona!"

"What!" cried the count. "I would have sworn— Fetch me his letter of ten months gone, René!"

While the secretary was away, Alphonse strode up and down the terrace, his heel

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tearing the soft turf at each turn. When René came back, the count seized the two parchments, and eagerly compared the seals.

"I can see no difference," he said at last.

"I said not that they were not the same," René replied. "I said I was not sure. They are very like; but there is a blur in the impression here. Nay, I am not sure."

"It is not like Bérenger to hire assassins," Alphonse mused. "Yet he hates me enough. Well, Pierre?"

"If my lord will send me to Barcelona—" Pierre began; but the count cut him short.

"To ask whether he sent a priest to stab me? Bérenger would take it as an insult—the more so if he is guilty—and throw you into his dungeon, or hang you!"

"Nay," Pierre smiled. "That were an insult indeed, and he would do well to hang me. But if you send me to him with an accusation and a challenge, thus:

" 'I, Alphonse, Count of Toulouse, overlord of Béziers, of Carcassonne, of Nimes, of Languedoc, and of Foix, do accuse thee, Raymond-Bérenger, of Barcelona, of the foul crime of attempted murder upon our person; and I do challenge thee to defend thyself against this charge in single combat with me, to the hazard of both our bodies, to the utterance!' What then? The bearer of a challenge has a herald's immunity. He would not dare decline a challenge on such a charge, lest all men hold him in scorn!"

Alphonse smiled broadly.

"Well thought!" he answered. "He and I should be well matched; and it is better for Toulouse that we settle all our quarrels at once, man to man, than that he should bring the King against us! René, draw up the challenge, and you, Pierre, be ready to ride. If the priest's confession bears out our suspicions— Ha, cousin!"

A tall, big-framed man strode through the postern, held up one hand in blessing, and shook the count's hand. It was the Prior of St. Sernin, our lord's kinsman. Some of you, *messires*, have seen him. You know how strangely his imperious face, his haughty eyes, his soldierly bearing, clash with the coarse sackcloth he wears—the garb of a poor monk, for all his princely blood. Count Alphonse greeted him with deep affection, calling him by his baptismal name:

"Thrice welcome, Robert! It is a shame that you come not to me save when I send for you! The memory of our boyhood together is very dear to me!"

"To me also, in so far as it was innocent," the prior answered. "But you live in the world, I in the spirit; and those two are strangers, Alphonse. But before you ask anything of me, I have a question for you. On whose side are you—the King's, or God's?"

"I stand by the Church. It seems that I must pay for it dearly, if the King and Bérenger unite against me."

"'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake,'" the prior quoted. "You have made my heart glad, cousin. God will defend His champions. Now what is your will with me?"

Briefly the count told him of the priest's attempt, and the message he bore from Barcelona. He told, too, of René's doubt concerning the seal, and his own purpose to put the priest to the question.

"I sent for you," he concluded, "because I dared not torture or condemn an ordained priest without the sanction of one high in the Church. Will you grant me authorization?"

Now my lord count was a merciful man. I have rarely known him to use the torture. But this affair justified the rack. All men know it is but justice to wring confession from a proven murderer, or would-be murderer. The prior hesitated not a whit.

"Lead me to the dungeon!" he replied. "I will myself take down for you his confession as a criminal; his confession as a penitent will be between himself and God!"

So the company descended to the dungeon.

The prisoner suffered neither much nor long. Before the third turn of the thumbscrew, he shrieked like a coward, and the words tumbled from his lips in his haste to escape the pain.

"Who incited you against the count's life?" the prior demanded.

"Mercy, good father! Mercy, lord count! It was—my lord of Barcelona!"

This was enough; and the rest was of small import. When he had said all, the prior sent the others from the room; for the wretch was to be hanged, and must make his peace with God. But half an hour later the prior came again to the terrace, his cheeks crimson with rage.

"The dog!" he cried. "The heretic hound!"

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"He refused absolution?" the count asked.

"Nay; he shrived himself and received absolution with all humility. But after he received the wafer, and when he thought my eyes turned aside, he spat under cover of his hand! Aye, he spat at the sacred wafer!"

All who listened shuddered, and crossed themselves. Ah, *messires*, what a sacrilege! But Pierre Faidit, bowing to the holy prior and to the count, begged leave to withdraw.

"Before I prepare to depart," he said, "I would fain see the rascal hanged."

Nor did any ask what was in his mind, though it was a strange thing for Pierre to do, who loved not to see men die in cold blood. He came back after a while, with something in his hand. It was a round, red box, no bigger than a cherry. Opening this before the company, he drew forth a bit of silk, with strange characters upon it.

"I used my authority to get a place by the prisoner," he explained. "When the cart moved from beneath his feet, and the rope choked him, he coughed this from his throat. I suppose he had tried to swallow it, but was too late."

All gazed on the box and the cloth, but none could understand the characters, which were in a writing such as they had never seen.

"Well?" the count asked, his eyes on Pierre.

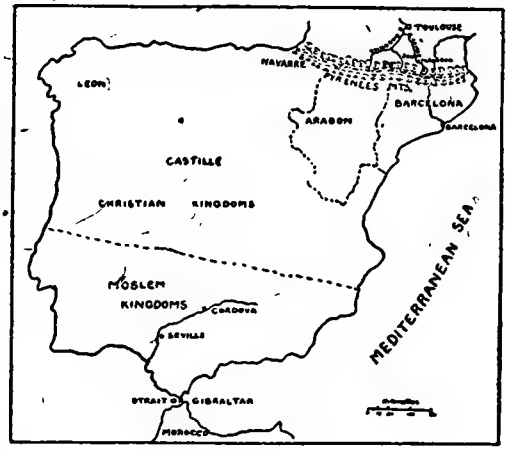
"If my lord pleases," my captain answered, "I wish twenty spearmen to ride with me to Barcelona, as a guard through the mountains. I would fain take this cloth with me; I may learn something from it, with God's help."

The next day Pierre set forth, bearing the challenge to Raymond-Bérenger; and as always, *messires*, I bore the banner.

WE RODE fast, being few and well-mounted; moreover, my captain was eager to reach Barcelona and the danger that he loved. For danger there was in bearding that grim warrior-noble, Bérenger, even for one who bore a formal challenge. The Count of Barcelona, son-in-law to Ramiro the Lion of Aragon, looked upon himself as a king in all save the name, and loved not to be opposed.

The sun sank as we reached the crag of Tarascon, where lay the black ruins of the proud tower where once Red Hugo defied Toulouse. Pierre smiled as he drew rein on the bank of the river girdling it. He himself had burned that wicked place, to free our lord from its menace, and to prevent Bérenger or the Queen's men from occupying it. Here we camped till dawn.

We mounted again as the morning sun burned on the snow-caps of the Pyrenees, that lay ahead like sullen giants across our path. The mountain trails were none too



good. Our captain bade us ride as close as the road allowed, and be silent and watchful. This was needful, *messires;* for the wild Basques inhabit those frontier solitudes, and they heed not the sacredness of an ambassador. Yet we saw none of them.

Now it must be remembered that neither Pierre, nor the count, nor any of us was sure that Bérenger had sent my lord that insolent letter, or hired the priest to murder him. We believed it, yes; but we were not certain. Nobles as good as he had done such deeds; but there was René's doubt about the seal. No great matter, but the least doubt will cling in a man's mind on such an errand. Moreover, there was the strange behavior of the priest, who had spat at the sacrament.

Bear these things in mind, *messires*, before you accuse my captain of violating his orders. He was deep in the count's trust; and that trust was so great that the understanding between them went beyond words. All Alphonse-Jourdain demanded was that Pierre accomplish what the count wished done; Pierre might settle details for himself. In this affair, the count wished, first, to find

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whether Bérenger had done those base things of which we believed him guilty; and next, to punish him in single combat if he were guilty, so that their enmity might be settled without a war. Pierre chose to accomplish those things in his own way; and I think he was right.

By noon we were in a deep mountain gorge, through which a snow-fed torrent boiled with savage fury. We had crossed a stone bridge a little while before, and now came to a sharp bend in the stream-bed. The walls of the gorge, and the stream, turned here as if twisted violently by the Creator's hand. One of the men, Red André, cursed aloud as his horse stumbled; and Pierre glared at him. Then, even as André muttered excuses, he held up his hand, and we halted, listening. Somewhere beyond the bend came a sound that all soldiers know well—the jangle of mail!

At a gesture from Pierre, we retreated; and straightway our three scouts rode back upon us in haste, reporting that a body of horse was advancing upon us. As quickly as we could without making noise, we made our way back to the bridge, and there drew up in column—the way was too narrow for battle-line—at the head of the bridge. It was very old, of solid Roman work, with a coping not more than a foot high. We felt safe now. In that position we could hold at bay ten times our number; and we remembered, proudly, how great a soldier our captain had proved himself before, against odds such as we should certainly not need to face that day.

It was a wonderful setting for a fight, *messires*. All about us the tremendous mountain-walls, the mighty white peaks, seamed with ice and veiled in waterfalls; the road behind us as clear as the blue sky above; the ancient bridge at our feet—with heaven knows what clinging memories of long-past wars—and the singing river below. Then—the drumming of many hoofs, the clanking jangle of mailed men riding in careless confidence—and they were around the bend and upon us.

Ah, what a flurry when they sighted us! A shout from him who led them, and they pulled up short, their lances bobbing as they halted. Never have I seen men look so astonished; for look you, this was their own territory. Short, massive Catalans they were, splendidly armored, arrogant of eye. It was plain to us all that these were no mere men-at-arms, but gentlemen all; and their commander the greatest gentleman of the troop.

He was a man well-made and strong, on a clean-limbed Spanish barb that must have cost him more than his gold-washed mail. In his peaked helmet he wore a single crimson plume; his shield was gold-bossed, and bore a black eagle on a silver field. Of his face we could see nothing save his proud eyes, and the thin lips between his steel nasal and mail gorget.

Beside him another, full as gay as he, sat a dainty ambling Arab horse, black as coal. This man could scarce be an officer; for he carried himself with an indifferent air, and glanced at us as if we were no concern of his. Yet suddenly I saw his eyes narrow, and marked that he stared with keen interest at our captain. So I watched him, and found him worthy of all my interest.

He was young; perhaps five and twenty. Though under the common height, he had massive shoulders and a broad, deep chest. His arms were very long, and somewhat loosely hung. These, and the quick, blue-green eyes of him, told me he would be both strong and swift in action. His helmet hung at his saddle-bow, so that his face, which was as beautiful as a woman's, was quite unhidden; the length of his loose locks, and his rich attire, marked him for a troubadour. His robe was of blue silk, its collar showing above his mail; a scarlet cloak, belted with a narrow girdle of gold plates, lay open about his bright hauberk. I observed him well, and set him down for a man to love and fear.

For a long moment the whole cavalcade glared at us, as if their haughty eyes could drive us from our strong position. Then, seeing we neither budged nor spoke, their leader rode slowly toward us, calling for a parley. Bowing, Pierre Faidit advanced to meet him.

"What do ye here on the march of Barcelona, ye dogs of Toulouse?" the officer cried; for he had seen our banner in my hand.

Pierre stiffened in his saddle.

"Dogs are we not!" he answered. "It is a hard name for men with whom your lord is at peace. We come on a message to the noble Count Raymond-Bérenger, and crave leave to accomplish it without hindrance or insult."

He of the crimson plume laughed harshly.

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"This is insolence indeed!" he sneered. "Having failed to murder our lord, ye send an embassy to him!"

Now it was Pierre's turn to stare.

"I know not what ye mean," he replied slowly; and the wrath rose in his voice as he went on: "Murder? Who has attempted murder but Bérenger? Your master hires knives against Toulouse, and then seeks to hide his guilt behind a false charge against us! Nay, sir—" for his adversary was about to speak—"I am no nobleman, but my sword is as keen as yours, and is at your service if you speak more villainy of Toulouse!"

I raised a cheer, and the men behind me joined their voices to mine. But Crimson-Plume claps hand to hilt, and cries:

"No noble? Who are you then, who dare to challenge a knight of Barcelona?"

"I am a soldier, called Pierre Faidit, whose title is vested in his sword!"

Before the Barcelonan could retort, the unhelmeted troubadour spurred forward, his black hair flying above his scarlet cloak. No deference had he for rank or office, but rode even between his officer and Pierre, and seized our captain's hand.

"Nay then, Pierre Faidit, it is you indeed!" he cried; and his smile would have won the heart of man or woman. "I thought I should know those shoulders; but I believed you dead in the ashes of Tarascon! How escaped you?"

Pierre smiled back joyously.

"Let Tarascon wait till a better time, Cercamon," he answered. "Glad am I to see you once more; but if you have any liking for me, I pray you persuade your companion to file his rough tongue to courtesy. He has spoken words that require much explanation from us both."

So Cercamon—for, *messires*, it was none other than that most illustrious of troubadours—spoke to his officer; and not gently, nor with the humility due to rank, but as a master speaks to a servant. And though the nobleman's eyes flashed, his tones were mild enough when he spoke again. That which he said set us all to gasping.

On the very day—if he spoke truth, and of that Cercamon assured us—on that very day when the villainous priest strove to stab Count Alphonse, another priest had driven a dagger into the heart of a courtier whom he mistook for the Count of Barcelona! Before he could be seized, the miscreant had stabbed himself, and perished. Nothing was found on him but—a letter sealed with the arms of Toulouse, and containing a defiance to Bérenger.

Thereupon Pierre, marveling, told of the attempt upon our own lord's life, and of the letter borne by the priest, with the seal of Bérenger. Great was the astonishment on both sides, and for a little the Barcelonan officer would not believe Pierre, swearing he had but fashioned his tale upon that he had just heard. But Pierre's fierce snatch at his sword, and Cercamon's ready oath that he would vouch for Pierre's word upon his life, convinced him.

Nay, Cercamon's own hand was on his hilt, and his greenish eyes burned into the officer's, as he gave this assurance. For that troubadour was so high in Bérenger's favor, and so terrible a swordsman, that no man south of the Pyrenees dared gainsay him.

FOR an hour the three talked before us all, weighing this strange matter. It was clear now, of course, that both letters had been forged, both to conceal the true murderer and to stir up Barcelona and Toulouse against each other. But how, or by whom, the deed was plotted, was a mystery. Crimson-Plume declared the plotter a fool, to risk a trick which must be found out as soon as the emissaries of both lords met; but Pierre answered him well:

"If this bridge had not been here, or if I had not fallen back upon it, would ye not have ridden us down without stopping to question? It was that on which he who plotted murder counted, if both his assassins failed. If one or both succeeded, he knew that war would break out at once between Barcelona and Toulouse. If both failed, then he counted shrewdly on a clash between such troops as would be sent out from our masters to seek redress; and the spilling of blood here in the mountains would have been but the beginning of a war that would have reddened all the South."

"Aye!" quoth Cercamon. "And now we must seek out him who planned the deed, if we have to look for him in ——! Both the murderers priests! Has Count Alphonse joined the King against the Church? I'll wager he has, and some great prelate has taken this means to deprive Louis of his help! Raymond-Bérenger, as you know, has always denied the Pope's authority in Barcelona."

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Pierre shook his head.

"Both priests," he answered; "but I can not believe the Church had a hand in this. Count Alphonse has always been in the Pope's favor, and has but now determined——"

Here he stopped, lest he reveal the count's secrets. But Cercamon interrupted:

"He has determined to help the Pope? Why, and so has Bérenger! Having heard rumors that the Moors meditate war, he dares not risk his life against them without the Pope's blessing. But he has not yet announced his resolve; and an overzealous prelate, remembering his old antagonism——"

"It is not likely," Pierre broke in. "Did I not tell you the priest spat at the sacrament? There is something wrong in this business; a zealous priest would not do such a sin. I will give you admission for admission; my lord has joined the Pope. No prelate would strike against our masters until he was sure they would oppose the Church."

"Why, then," the troubadour said, "with two such great lords against him, the King will not dare carry the struggle further. He will submit to the Pope!"

Which later turned out to be true, *messires;* but that is not the tale.

Pierre drew from his neck a little bag on a cord, and from it took a tiny red box, the shape and size of a cherry—the same he had taken from the hanged priest. Opening it, he showed the silken cloth, with its strange characters, to Cercamon and Crimson-Plume.

"What make ye of this?" he asked; and the two eyed it.

"Why, it is Arabic!" cried Crimson-Plume. "I can not read it, but I have seen such characters often in Saragossa."

"Arabic indeed," said Cercamon. "I speak the tongue, but know not its letters."

"Then it is in my mind," Pierre remarked, "that the two murderous priests were no priests at all, but Moors disguised. You speak of a Moorish war. We must look to the paynims of Andalusia for the solving of this mystery."

But Cercamon shook his head.

"The Moors are our foes, it is true," he admitted. "They would like well to stir up strife between Barcelona and Toulouse, so that they might attack Aragon and win back Saragossa. But the Moor is no murderer, Pierre. I have sung in their courts, and crossed swords with them in their lists; and I have ever found them knightly gentlemen. We Christians may use the knife and the poison-bowl against our enemies; but I have never known a Moor who would not rather die than stain his knightly honor so!"

Every Catalan in the troop bore witness that this was true; nor would they believe that the Arabic writing found on the priest was aught but a blind.

"For the pink of chivalry," swore Crimson-Plume, "commend me to the Moors! Paynims though they be, though they will fight to the death against hopeless odds, they scorn to win advantage by treachery!"

So we were no wiser than before; and none of us knew what to do, seeing that to bear our challenge to Bérenger now would be folly. Crimson-Plume gnawed his nails, for he had been on his way to Toulouse on a like errand. It was Cercamon who settled the matter.

"Why, there is a rare adventure in this!" he cried. "An adventure made for you and me, Pierre! Send your men home; I will persuade Count Urgel here to take his troop back to Barcelona; and we two shall set forth on a quest to unravel the mystery!"

Pierre thought, and at last agreed.

"But I want my men," he answered. "Do you return to Barcelona, Sir Count, with your gentlemen. Cercamon and we of Toulouse will undertake the quest."

Count Crimson-Plume had no wish to let us of Toulouse seek a glory denied to his Catalans; but Cercamon persuaded him. He himself, being of a romantic soul, was displeased at Pierre's insistence that we troopers come; but he could not shake Pierre's resolution.

When Count Urgel and his men were half an hour on their way homeward, Pierre bade us wheel about.

"But whither?" urged the troubadour. "Not to Toulouse?"

Pierre laughed.

"To Narbonne!" he answered; and his friend stared.

"Why to Narbonne?" he cried.

"Narbonne has a harbor."

"A harbor? What, in the fiend's name, do we want with a harbor?"

"Ships!" Pierre replied. "Look you, Cercamon: your report of Moorish chivalry has so stirred me that I can not rest till I

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have seen these paynim knights for myself. The way overland is too rough, and dangerous for so few men. Therefore we will go by sea."

Cercamon seized Pierre's rein.

"But I tell you no Moor would murder! You will not find your arch-villain in Spain!"

"Where shall I find him?" Pierre retorted; and he was serious enough now. "We have undertaken to find and punish him, whoever and wherever he may be. It is like shooting an arrow in the dark, my friend. One place is as likely as another. We may as well go anywhere; and so, since I am anxious to see the Moorish courts, let us go there first!"

"You have some scheme!" the troubadour hazarded. "Since you could come alive out of the cells of Tarascon, and leave the place in ashes, I am willing to trust your wits for anything. Well, to what Moorish court will you go?"

"Which is the greatest?"

It was Cercamon's turn to laugh.

"You inland Frenchmen know nothing of Spain! There is but one Moslem court of much importance—Cordova. Ah, Pierre! It is a fair and great city, the center of Moorish grandeur from Segovia to Gibraltar! It is——"

"It is our goal!"

So we turned our horses' heads northeast; and on the second day we took ship from Narbonne.

OF THE voyage, *messires*, I say nothing; save that it lasted eleven days, during which all of us save Pierre—a fisherman by birth—were sick. Of our flight from a Berber corsair——

But that is not in the tale. The last day we were under the escort of a Moorish galley from Seville, one of a squadron that patrolled the Straits against the Berbers.

Its captain gave us a gallant welcome when Pierre told him we were men of France come to win martial glory in the lists at Cordova. We knew then that Cercamon had spoken truth about the Moorish love of feats of chivalry.

Past the tidal marshes of the Guadalquivir this galley bore us company, and through a most fertile region to the great city of Seville. Here we were obliged to quit our ship, which was held till our return by command of the emir of the city, Ibn-Wezir.

By his order also our escort dropped us, for this galley was his. He was lord of the West of Spain; but east of Seville all the land was ruled by Ibn-Hamdin, Caliph of Cordova. So we continued up the river in a lateen-rigged river-boat, manned by naked blackamoors, with a guard of a dozen spearmen.

Their officer was a gaily bedizened Moslem, and as courtly a gentleman as ever I saw. His name was Ibn-Abdallah. He knew French, and we needed not to rely on Cercamon's bad Arabic. Nor in all that land did we ever see a noble who knew not some French; and many, as Cercamon said, knew Latin. The Moors cherish learning as much as we, *messires*, despise it.

All the way to Cordova the river-banks were green with fair gardens and ablaze with flowers. The roses nestled even about the great tower which we presently sighted at the head of a huge stone bridge spanning the river. Armed guards lined the parapets of tower and bridge; and, landing, we proceeded to the tower-gate, where we were questioned—though most courteously—before we could go farther. When Pierre and the troubadour gave their names, the paynim soldiers clashed their weapons together as a mark of honor to two such famous soldiers.

Those Moors were lean, sinewy fellows, with the mark of the drilled cavalier. Their chain-mail was so fine of mesh that it could be rolled up in a small packet, and their surcoats were striped with bright colors. Their turbans also were gay, and were wrapped around their spiked and inlaid helmets; their weapons were slender javelins, long lances, bows, and simitars. Some, however, wore the famous straight blades of Murcia, made on the pattern of our own cross-hilted swords.

It was high noon before the messenger sent to the palace returned to bid us enter the city. By the caliph's order Ibn-Abdallah was commanded to bring us to the royal presence. Many were the compliments the caliph heaped upon us in that gracious message; for Cercamon he knew already, and Pierre's fame as a swordsman had long since reached Spain. It was like their Moorish chivalry to judge men by deeds instead of rank.

Ibn-Abdallah led us by a roundabout way, that we might see more of Cordova. Ah, *messires*, never was a city so beautiful!

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Crossing the bridge, we found ourselves before the chief gate of a massive crenellated wall, beyond which lay a great square, paved with large mosaic stones as flat as a table.

All about us were splendid buildings with arches of fretted stone and plaster, delicate as lace. Above them in the distance rose a score of dainty minarets. Walls and columns gleamed with marble, bronze, and alabaster; fountains were everywhere, and flowers.

Once, passing down a narrow street, we reached a lovely gate set under a horseshoe arch, carved in an intricate design of such beauty that we stopped to marvel. Ibn-Abdallah frowned, and hurried us on; but not till the door opened, to reveal a vista of slender columns and many-colored arches all agleam with gold in the glow of bronze lamps. It was a Moslem church, *messires* —their chief mosque.

Our eyes were sated with beauty, weary with gazing at the brilliantly garbed people, before we reached the palace. It was a city in itself—a city of marble, gold and jewels, with a population of its own. Nobles in silks and gems bowed to us; soldiers in fine armor swaggered past; scholars flitted through forests of sculptured pillars, with books in their hands. We walked long through its courts before we reached the throne-room; and there, at the end of a double row of guardsmen, we saw a flashing throne on a dais. Upon that throne sat a man in middle age, robed in white, white-turbaned. It was Ibn-Hamdin, the caliph.

Unbelievable is Moorish hospitality! Here were we, Frenchmen, enemies both by blood and by creed to him who sat enthroned above us. Yet he received us as friends—nay, as kinsmen—for the sake of our leaders' names. Cercamon, who had sung in his presence the year before, the caliph kissed on both cheeks.

When Pierre told him we were come to try our valor with his champions in the tournament, he smiled upon us, graciously saying that on the fourth day thereafter there was to be a festival at which we might meet the foremost swords of Spain. In the mean time we must rest, and taste the pleasures of his palace.

And so we did. We reveled in hot and cold baths, dined on foods more exquisite than any we ever tasted, drank the finest wines—for the Moors, as you know, cared little for their prophet's injunction against wine. We were lodged in the east wing of the palace, overlooking the river and the town. In the courtyard there was ample space for the martial exercises which our captain would not let us neglect. Every day, Pierre and Cercamon fenced before us all; and, oh, *messires!* Never had I seen such sword-play. They were as nearly matched as men can be, and each was a master.

During these three days Cercamon often questioned Pierre, but our captain put his questions by with a smile. The troubadour still believed that some unscrupulous ecclesiastic had hired his underlings to attempt the murder of our lords, though he could give no sound reason. It was the priest's garb that influenced him. Pierre insisted that the Church had nothing to do with it; yet he agreed that, if all Moors were like the caliph and his nobles, the guilt could hardly lie with them.

He had every chance to test their character. Each day the Moors flocked in to do us honor: the nobles of the *diwan*, the chief officers of the palace guard and the army, the councilors—all visited us, squatting at our feet and praising us in courtly phrases. The least of them was a soldier and a man of learning. Most of them greeted Cercamon as an old and valued acquaintance, and he often sang for them. Yet, I could see, Pierre's strong features and mighty limbs won their esteem as much as did the troubadour's sweet songs.

AMONG those who paid us honor was a very great man, the Syrian Emir of Edessa, who was on a visit of state to the caliph. This Arab was the biggest man I have ever seen—taller even than Pierre, and well nigh as broad. His face was swarthy even for a Moor, with great black eyes that rolled fiercely, a jutting jaw, and the hooked beak of a bird of prey. Cercamon liked him little, for all his fine ways; but I marked that Pierre seemed to hold him in high esteem.

Now Pierre did a strange thing. During all these three days before the tournament, he wore upon his breast the silken cloth with Arabic characters which he had taken from the hanged priest. Every Moor who visited us saw it; every one, as his eyes rested upon it, started and frowned.

As he noted their astonishment, Pierre questioned them concerning it; but he got

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little satisfaction. They answered that it was an accursed thing, and begged him to destroy it; but they would not tell him what the characters meant. His eyes grew bright with excitement, for he felt that somehow, if he could but find a man who would interpret the writing, he would find the key to the strange plot against Barcelona and Toulouse.

Only one man failed to show confusion at sight of the cloth; and that was the Syrian emir, whose name was Mulai abu-Hassan el-Ussari. He smiled, but would no more explain it than the others, beyond saying that all good Moslems abhorred the words written upon it. When he left us, Pierre gazed after him curiously, but said nothing.

On the day of the tournament we rose at dawn. Pierre and Cercamon armed each other; and when they stood full-mailed, Pierre bound the cloth to his helmet. We breakfasted frugally, taking no wine. Our mail and arms were spotless, our weapons ground to the utmost keenness.

As we waited for our summons a marvelous thing happened. We had not been able to bring our horses. Had we come by land, they would have been worn out, and we could not easily take them by sea. Our captain and Cercamon had determined to fight on foot, in the sword-combats. We men-at-arms were to stand by, for the tournament is not for such as we. But even as Ibn-Abdallah came to lead us forth, there approached one whose gorgeous dress and gold-washed armor proclaimed him a noble of great estate, who bowed low before us, saying:

"*Effendim*, the officers of the caliph's guard have the honor to place their best horses at your disposal. Slaves will have the chargers in readiness at the lists; and you will find them trained to bear you in the tournament. The Emir of Edessa himself begs that Faidit *Effendi* will accept his Barbary stallion!"

The courtliness with which Pierre thanked him matched his own. But as Pierre bowed, the Moor caught sight of the cloth in his helmet, and cried out:

"Whence got you that, *effendi*? Know you what it means?"

Pierre's eyes gleamed; but he answered calmly:

"I had it from a priest of my faith. I know not its meaning. Do you?"

And he watched the man narrowly.

The Moor replied:

"I do; but a Christian would not understand. There is a curse upon it!"

Pierre would have asked more, but at that moment the trumpets blew and the naquirs clashed; the Moor bowed, and went away in haste. As Pierre made to follow, Ibn-Abdallah pulled him back, saying:

"Peace! To one side! The caliph comes!"

We waited in an angle of the great gate fronting the lists to take our place behind the caliph. A gorgeous sight lay beyond the open archway. On the wide plain between the river and the *sierra*, a wooden enclosure of great space had been set up, gaily painted and hung with streamers of rainbow silk. The road between it and the palace was lined with archers and spearmen.

On both sides a multitude had gathered, waiting, like ourselves, for the caliph to pass. Outside the lists and beyond the throng, horsemen in full armor galloped up and down, throwing blunted javelins or going through mock tilts in preparation for the stern encounters to come. They made gallant figures, and their mounts were superb.

Heralded by the clang of harsh music, and preceded by the household guards, Ibn-Hamdin rode down between his troops. The multitude fell on their faces; none stood upright save the soldiers and we Christians, who prostrate ourselves only to God. But as the caliph drew alongside us, we knelt, and he noticed us. His eyes rested upon the cloth in Pierre's helmet; and I would have sworn he turned pale.

"Whence came that, Frank?" he cried; and Pierre answered him as he had answered the noble.

The caliph turned his eyes away, and rode on. Yet Pierre would not remove the cloth. He was a stubborn man; and now he knew that it held the key not only to our mystery, but to something hidden that these Moors feared and hated.

When he had passed, Ibn-Abdallah led us to a great pavilion that was set up for us on one side of the lists. Our horses were there; but though they had been given us, our captain would not permit us to take part in the tournament. Therefore we were stationed, mounted and armed, on one side of the lists within the great enclosure, opposite the caliph's guards; and Pierre and the troubadour led their horses within the pavilion.

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I know not what they said or did till they came out to fight. But I heeded not at the time, for my eyes were on the gorgeous throng about the caliph. Though the lists were long they were of no great width. We could almost count the jewels on the caliph's turban; and faces we could see plainly.

For some while, lesser combats preceded the great tilts. Splendid enough they were, with feats of horsemanship to delight the eye, and marvelous skill in casting of the dart. We saw, too, encounters such as we love in France, one warrior hurling another from the saddle, or splintering his spear with honor. The Moors had learned this kind of combat from the Christians of Leon and Aragon. But at last all these were over, and the trumpet sounded for the great combats between champions.

An officer of the royal household rode out as challenger—a big man on a roan stallion. He rode thrice around the lists, bowing to the caliph, and uttered his challenge in loud tones. I looked to see my captain or Cercamon come out against him; but the curtain of their pavilion was still drawn.

A second Moor spurred into the ring. Their combat was glorious. The challenger unhorsed his man at the third course, slew a second with a thrust through the throat, and dismounted a third.

Still Pierre came not forth, nor the troubadour. An Andalusian knight overthrew the challenger, and took his place. The crowd stared with impatient wonder at our pavilion, but they stared in vain. The encounters followed one another, a Christian Spaniard from Burgos winning high honors, so that I blushed that he, and not a Frenchman, upheld the Cross against the Crescent.

THEN the caliph commanded that the contenders fight six pairs at once; and now Pierre Faidit and Cercamon dashed into the ring. For an hour the warriors strove together, each man who fell replaced by another who hoped to unhorse the victor, and always twelve champions clashing in six courses at a time. Four men constantly overthrew their opponents: the Spaniard, a dashing Cordovan emir, and our two Frenchmen. At last no more came out; and these four wheeled to meet one another.

But the caliph gave order that Pierre and the troubadour might not face the other pair yet, for these had fought in more combats than our men, and were wearier. Yet when Pierre and Cercamon cried out for men to fight them, none dared answer. So the caliph ordered a rest of an hour, that the wearier men might regain their strength. Only when this period was over did the trumpets sound for renewed conflict.

Swiftly the four, who had retired to their tents, trotted back to their places in the arena; Pierre and Cercamon at one end, their antagonists at the other. Cercamon faced the emir; Pierre, the Spaniard. The spectators could not keep their seats. This was the decisive moment of the greatest tournament in Spain. If the Frenchmen could overthrow those proved champions, they would win both the prize and the prestige of conquering the first lances south of the Pyrenees.

Some strange instinct moved me to turn my eyes from them for a moment. I looked toward the caliph's seat. There beside him, leaning far over the rail in his excitement, was that huge Syrian, Mulai el-Ussari of Edessa. His eyes gleamed with cruel light; an evil smile twitched on his lips.

The contestants met in a cloud of dust, with a shock that set their armor clanging. Then rose a cry from ten thousand throats, for the Moor and the Spaniard were down! Slowly our captain and Cercamon trotted back to their places, and our French hearts swelled with pride. We had won the day over the chivalry of Spain! But even as I clapped my hands, I stole a glance at the Syrian. His face was savage as a thundercloud; then it changed, his eyes lighting with fierce resolution.

Now Pierre cried his challenge. He defied the chivalry of Andalusia; but none replied. The caliph rose to ask the two victors to ride against each other. Courteously, but with resolution, they refused.

Suddenly the Syrian, Mulai el-Ussari, vaulted the rail into the arena. In his white burnoose he stood there, his gesture commanding silence. His eyes on Pierre, he shouted so that all could hear:

"Give not the prize to these, O Caliph, Prince of the Age! Before the Crescent shall bow to the Cross, I myself will ride against them. Let the tall Frank face me first!"

As the caliph hesitated, he spoke again:

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"The *effendi*, Faidit, and I will ride three courses with the spear. If neither is unhorsed we will fight with the sword till one of us be overcome. If I prevail, then I will fight the troubadour!"

The caliph protested. Though blood had been shed in the earlier courses, it had been by the hazards incident to the tournament, not with evil intent. This challenge of Mulai's was a deliberate defiance to mortal combat, from which death could be the only outcome, since surrender would mean disgrace. But Mulai insisted on his right to challenge in the lists, on any terms his antagonist would accept; and I thought there was more than the mere joy of combat in Pierre's acceptance. So our two men trotted gently up and down the ring, lest their horses grow stiff, while the Syrian went to arm himself.

He rode into the ring at a thundering gallop; and I trembled for Pierre, great soldier though he was. On horseback and in mail the Arab looked much bigger than before; his charger was a big black beast that caracoled with the energy of boundless strength. The two antagonists drew back for the charge.

They came together with a crashing shock that forced both horses to their hind legs. When they recovered, it was seen that the great weight of men and beasts had caused both lances to shiver at the butts, and both shields were pierced. Yet neither man seemed hurt.

The attendants brought fresh lances, and again they met. This time Pierre swayed in his saddle. Then we Frenchmen groaned indeed; yet he held his seat. The third time, just before they came together, a shrill whistle sounded; and a terrible thing happened. I saw the Syrian sink his lance so that he aimed not at Pierre's shield, but strangely low; and instantly our captain's horse fell flat.

A thousand throats raised a wild shout, all the spectators crying out one word. Later I learned that the word was "Treachery!" These gallant Moors, who loved a fair fight, were cursing their own champion for his villainous trick.

There was no doubt of Mulai's guilt. A horse may indeed stumble by accident; but the horse Pierre had ridden had been given by Mulai himself. The whistle was a signal, at which the beast was trained to fall. What put this past all doubt was Mulai's action after Pierre had fallen.

His soldier's instinct saved Pierre; else the Syrian's spear would have torn through the mail at his throat. As you know, *messires*, the armor coming into fashion now, with its burden of plate above mail, cumbers a man's movements; but Pierre wore only chain-mail, under the lesser weight of which a man can move freely, unless he be weak. As his charger fell, our captain threw himself from the saddle, lighted on his feet, and raised his shield to ward his head. Mulai struck it fair, the momentum of his charge flinging Pierre headlong. As he fell, he rolled, barely escaping the trampling hoofs of Mulai's horse.

The caliph, standing on his seat, shouted to his guards to stop the fight; and they, whose duty it was to see fair play, hurried forward to separate the combatants. But before they could act, Pierre was up, his sword out, and ordered them to stand back and let him settle his own quarrels. The rules of the tourney, with the Moors as with us, gave him the right to do this. Treachery had been practised against him; he had the privilege of demanding that the victory be awarded to him by forfeit, or of fighting out the battle without interference.

Choosing the second course, he was free thenceforth to fight as he would. His adversary's foul play gave Pierre the right to win—if he could—by taking advantage of any means that came to him. No rules bound him now; but his treacherous opponent was put in the wrong. If Mulai won, his life would be forfeit to the caliph, for his offense; if he lost—death at Pierre's hands.

Understanding this, the Syrian brought his horse about, and spurred down on his dismounted enemy. Pierre awaited him grimly, ready to leap aside from the point of that menacing lance. But there was one in the arena who cared more for his friend's life than for an angry man's desire to take personal vengeance.

As the Syrian bore down, I set my lance in rest; but I reined in when I saw Cercamon spur to met him. The troubadour's lance pierced Mulai's horse through the breast; and as the beast dropped, Cercamon drew off, crying:

"Now, Pierre! Sword against sword is fair play!"

The massed crowd broke into wild cheers of applause. Their chivalrous love of a

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fair field took Mulai's treachery as a stain on their honor and their religion; Cercamon's swift stroke, though a breach of strict rules, had only restored the balance of the fight. As he had said, sword against sword was fair play. By his sudden change of aim to a point lower than would profit in an honest tilt, and his readiness to attack a dismounted man from the vantage-ground of his own saddle, the Syrian had justified any act that took this unfair vantage from him.

Now it was taken from him indeed. His own horse slain, he was barely prepared for Pierre's furious onrush, and for a little while he gave ground rapidly. Cercamon kept his horse abreast of the fight, watching against further foul play; and the guards, though withdrawn in order not to impede the combatants, were ready to spur forward at need.

Finding his stance at last, the Syrian covered up with his round shield and took the offensive. His sword was straight and long, like a Christian's or a Berber's; as he struck, it drove home with a weight and a ring that showed its temper and its owner's. Both men were so powerful that their shields could not stand the blows, and, hacked to splinters after a few strokes, were cast aside. Then it was sword to sword, skill against skill. By our Lady, they were closely matched! It needed all Pierre's cunning to fend that terrible blade from face and breast and thighs; yet again and again he snatched a stolen second to strike back shrewdly.

Of a sudden the Syrian leaped back. Before Pierre could close on him, he whirled up his weapon, made one stride forward, and smote down with all his might. Pierre flung up his own blade to ward the stroke; but Mulai's steel cut through the fine French sword as if it were lath, and struck Pierre's helmet from his head. Cercamon threw Pierre his sword; but our captain, ignoring it, flung his own shattered stump in the Syrian's face. It stuck in the space between and below the cheek-bones, where no mail protected. I saw blood burst from Mulai's lips.

His dagger drawn, Pierre sprang for the Moslem, who waited in murderous rage. I looked to see Pierre split like a herring by that awful sword; but as Mulai raised it, Pierre's dagger flew from his hand. It pierced the mail above the Syrian's upper arm, and buried itself in the flesh. Unable to wield his sword, Mulai dropped it and fled from the field. Pierre sped after him; the guards closed in to seize the fugitive; Cercamon set spurs to his horse.

Even as the guards drew about him, one of them, reaching forward as if to seize him, urged his horse between Mulai and the others. But instead of leaning over his horse's neck to catch the Syrian's mantle, the guard leaped from the saddle, quickly helped Mulai to mount in his place, and faced about to impede the other guards. Astounded, they let a precious moment slip; and in that moment Cercamon bounded up. His horse had given him a start of Pierre, who was running forward at full career.

But Cercamon, in his haste, had neglected to pick up his sword. As he closed in, the false guard launched a furious blow at him. Cercamon swerved; the blow missed him, but cut deep into his horse's thigh. Then the traitor fell, pierced by three swords at once. The faithful guards left him lying, and spurred off after the Syrian.

Mulai el-Ussari was riding down the arena at a frantic gallop, his spurs plowing up and down his charger's flanks. After him streamed the guards; a second detachment pelted up from the gate of the lists to head him off. Before they could reach him, a dozen Arabs sprang from among the yelling crowd and threw themselves between. From under their burnooses they drew short swords; they charged full at the advancing guardsmen, and fell to hacking and stabbing. Their unexpected assault threw the horsemen into disorder for a moment; and in that moment Mulai shot past them unscathed, through the gate, and beyond our sight.

The lists were in an uproar, the crowd pouring down to assail the Arabs who had enabled Mulai to escape. As I shouted to our twenty Frenchmen, I heard the caliph cry upon his soldiers to overtake the Syrian and drag him back to death. Then I was in the road, our men behind me. Back of us as we galloped, we heard the gathering thunder of the Cordovan pursuit; and I judged the strange Arabs overpowered or slain.

Ahead, almost at the palace gate, the rascal Mulai was urging his horse at a tremendous pace. Through the gate he

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bounded, into the courtyard beyond; and, remembering that there were guards there, I thought we had him. But to those guards in the palace, who had not seen the fight, he seemed no villain, but an honored foreign prince. When we reached the gate, he was out of sight.

There was not a doorway, not an arch, in that palace that a man could not ride through. We separated in the great court, some taking one way, some another; and on horseback we hunted through the grand palace of Cordova. Behind us followed the Moors, and as eager to run him down as we. We combed that palace through and through, but found him not. There was not even a drop of blood to show which turn he had taken; the torn padding under his armor must have stopped the rent in his mail, and let the blood flow down under his armor. The multitude of courts and corridors so confused us that we may well have missed him by a few yards a score of times. It was long ere we gave up the search within the walls to seek him through the city.

When I and a few others came out by the gate that faced the city, a troop of the caliph's horse was clattering down the broad street toward the heart of town and the bridge. We followed, thinking of nothing save the chance to lay hands on the Syrian. Straight for the bridge rode the Moors, and we after them, passing at every cross-street, square, and by-lane other soldiers searching the city for the caitiff. The town was seething with the caliph's soldiery; I saw them enter house after house, ransack the market-booths, peering under rolls of matting and behind bales of goods; nay, they searched the very mosques.

We pelted over the bridge to the tower at its end. The guard at the bridgehead turned out at sight of the troopers ahead of us; and as we rode up an officer questioned the guard. Aye, they had seen the Emir of Edessa; he had come across the bridge but a little before us, riding like a *djinn* on the wings of the wind.

A swift boat, one of the caliph's pleasure-craft, had been moored at the water's edge. Into it he had leaped, crying that he went on the caliph's business; and knowing him the caliph's honored guest, the guard had let him go. Hoisting the lateen, he was off down-river with a following wind. See! Yonder his sail!

A score of Moors leaped into three boats and made after him. Knowing ourselves of little use, we rode back, slowly and in weary disgust, to the palace.

OUR captain and Cercamon awaited us in our quarters. The troubadour was still cursing, but swore that the false guards and those who had impeded pursuit were no true Moors. We reported our useless pursuit, and Pierre smiled.

"Now that it is too late, I have learned something," he said.

He sat on a cushion on the floor—for the Moors use not chairs as we do—and across his knees was that great sword which Mulai had let fall when the dagger pierced his shoulder. It was a masterpiece of the smith's art: gray-blue Damascus steel, heavy, but of such perfect temper that Pierre, exerting all his great strength, could bend it double. As he let its point go, it straightened with a deep hum and a flash like lightning. The cross-hilt was plated heavily with gold; a large ruby gleamed in its pommel; and from guard to point it was richly chased in gold.

Holding the blade so that the light caught fairly, he pointed to the midmost of its designs, and then drew forth the silken cloth he had worn on his helmet. The characters on the blade were tiny—so tiny that it must be held close to read them—but though I am no scholar, *messires*, even I could see that, line for line and dot for dot, the writing on the cloth matched the inlaid figures on the sword!

"We have found our man and lost him again," laughed Pierre; and Cercamon cursed again, his blue-green eyes like the sea when a storm is making.

Toward dark we were summoned to the caliph. Aye, all of us; for this noble monarch so valued his honor that he must justify it in the eyes of even the lowest spearman of us all. We found him in a small, bare chamber, reading by a cluster of bronze lamps.

Motioning Pierre and the troubadour to sit, "He has escaped," he said. "He had confederates; not only the spy he had among my guards, and the swordsmen among the spectators, but others outside the city. When the pursuing boats pressed him hard, and my horsemen followed him down both banks of the river, a column of smoke rose from a hill on the left bank, and a galley bore up-stream and picked him up. I have

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sent couriers to Seville, to pray Ibn-Wezir that swift galleys be sent in pursuit; but the dog has a long start."

"I thank your Majesty," Pierre answered. "I would give much to have him caught. May I show your Majesty this?"

Into the caliph's hand he put the silken cloth, and showed the sword, with its writing in gold.

"The characters are the same," he said.

The caliph nodded.

"I might have guessed. If I had known this morning what I know now, he who called himself Mulai Abu-Hassan would have been thrown headless into the Guadalquivir. But tell me now, *effendi*—" and his eyes grew stern—"your real reason for coming to Cordova! The last few hours have shown that your possession of this cloth has some secret meaning."

Pierre hesitated.

"I can tell your Majesty only on the condition that you will not use what I say against France."

"Or against Barcelona!" put in Cercamon.

The caliph touched his hand to brow, lips and heart.

"By the faith of a Moslem," he swore, "I will never again raise a hand against any Christian state! It is an easy promise, since all my strength will be needed to defend Cordova. Speak, *effendi*."

So Pierre, with interruptions now and then from the troubadour, told him all I have told you here, from the attempts upon the lives of Bérenger and Count Alphonse to our arrival in Cordova. He listened intently, with a bitter smile.

When Pierre had finished—

"Let me read you these!" the caliph said. From the folds of his burnoose he drew a number of parchment rolls. "These, *effendim*, were found by my men in Mulai's apartments. As Emir of Edessa, he enjoyed the hospitality of my palace. He fled too fast to visit his lodging, for he knew well how I would punish such treachery as he practised against you. Listen!"

As he read the scrolls, one after another, the hairs lifted on my head. The first was a minute account of the strength of Cordova: its walls, its towers, the garrison and arms of each. The second was a like description of Barcelona; and by Cercamon's outcry I judged it was exact. The third contained a list of all the strongholds of Aragon, the condition of the roads across the Pyrenees, the revenues of every district under Bérenger's rule. And the fourth, *messires*, numbered accurately the garrisons of Foix, Nimes, Carcassonne, Béziers, Aigues-Mortes, aye, and of Toulouse itself! Having finished, the caliph handed this parchment to Pierre. Drawn with an engineer's skill, the plan of city and castle of Toulouse!

"That man is the devil!" cried Pierre.

"Nay, but the chief of the devil's servants," the caliph answered. "He it was, *effendim*, who tried to procure the murder of your lords. His spies are everywhere, from Syria to Spain. Learning from his agents of the quarrel between your King and your Pope, he recognized that the chance he has long waited and prayed and intrigued for had come."

"But who is he?" Pierre and the troubadour gasped together.

"He is Abd-el-Mumin, false prophet of the heretical Moslem sect of the Almohades, the foes of all true Moslems! Having lured the Berbers from the true faith of Islam, he had made himself master of North Africa. Now his eyes are on Spain, and beyond Spain, on—France!"

"But how did he deceive you?" cried Cercamon.

"I welcomed him for what he claimed to be—the Emir of Edessa in Syria. He had credentials—forged, as he forged the letters received by your lords. For a skilled hand such a thing is easy. Do not all rulers set up, in the market-places, proclamations signed with their seals, for all to see? Only the tardy discovery of his records showed me——"

He paused, and then resumed sadly:

"I must make a confession, *effendim*. I have long dreamed of the day when my troops should overwhelm Aragon, Catalonia and Barcelona, and bear the green banner of the prophet into France. Yet I knew that this was but a dream, that all the swords in Cordova would not suffice for such a conquest. Then came this false devil, calling himself Emir of Edessa, which the Syrian Moslems have recently won from the Franks.

"He promised me, if I would proclaim a holy war against the Christians, that all Syria would pour out its multitudes to help me. When I hesitated, he told me of this impending strife between your King and your Pope, and that soon all France, aye,

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and Barcelona, would be at civil war. Then I swore I would attack you, as soon as that war should break out. It was to force the war that he abused my hospitality to plot murder against your lords. If I had but known, had but guessed, who he was!

"The writing on his sword, and on the cloth you bore on your helmet, is the Almohade creed: 'Allah, God One and Indivisible! To the Moslem who worships saints, to the Christian, death and the fires of Eblis!' The priest who struck at the Count of Toulouse, like him who failed to slay Bérenger, was an Almohade, the fanatical servant of Abd-el-Mumin. The cloth, in its box, was an amulet to ward off the damnation that wearing Christian garb would otherwise have cost his soul.

"Seeing that cloth in your hands, Faidit *Effendi*, Abd-el-Mumin must have feared that you had guessed his plans, perhaps his identity. It was necessary, therefore, that you die. He hoped that you would be slain in the tournament. When you emerged victorious, he felt compelled to kill you himself. Your skill forced him to resort to treachery, which he hoped in vain to accomplish without detection. But how did you know, *effendim*, that the man you sought was in Cordova?"

"We did not know," Pierre answered. "But I had seen that any other chance was impossible. I set out to punish Bérenger for what I thought his crime. The attempt on his life proved he had no hand in the assault on my master. No Christian prelate would have had sufficient reason for such a deed; therefore, I knew that the priestly garb was a disguise. The guilty man must be one to whose interest it was that Toulouse and Barcelona should destroy each other.

"She who is Duchess of Aquitaine and Queen of France had such an interest; but now, when the King, her husband, is bidding for the support of all his nobles, she would not dare. The only other power to profit by war between these provinces was Moslem Spain; and Cordova is the heart of Moslem Spain. Therefore, and guided by the Arabic written on this cloth, I came. God forgive me, I thought your Majesty guilty, though Cercamon told me I was wrong. Your pardon!"

The caliph bowed.

"Wrong though you were, your wisdom has saved France. For Barcelona is the gateway of France; and if war had broken out between your lords, my armies would have poured through that unguarded gateway. You may well have saved Cordova also. These writings show that the 'Syrian' troops that would have come to my aid would have been the savage Berber hordes of the Almohades, who hate true Moslems as bitterly as they hate Christians. And they would have been led by the false Mulai, the evil prophet, Abd-el-Mumin. He has left my land now; doubtless he has fled from Spain, since I have warned Seville. But one day he will return, *effendim;* and then—may Allah help Andalusia!"

He prophesied truly, *messires:* as you know, two years later the Almohades made Cordova a waste of blood and ashes.

"You will stay with me a while?" the caliph resumed.

Kneeling, Pierre kissed his hand.

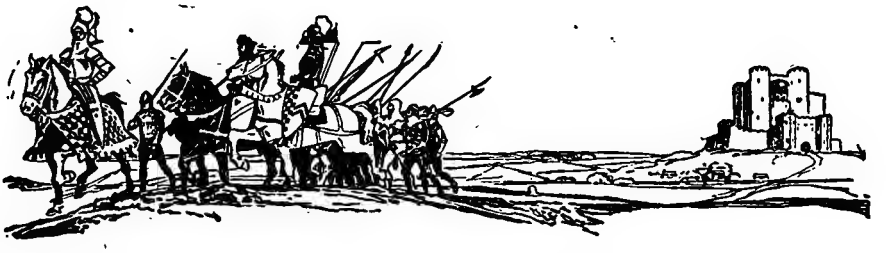
"Your Majesty must give us leave," he answered. "We must go home. Our thanks be with you, and the blessing of God!"

The caliph pointed to Abd-el-Mumin's sword.

"And that?" he asked.

"I shall take it with me," Pierre replied. "It shall be blessed by the Prior of St. Sernin; and one day, if God lets me live, I will plunge it into Abd-el-Mumin's heart!"

From that day, *messires*, he was rarely spoken of as Pierre Faidit. Men called him *Pierre de l'Espée*—"Pierre of the Sword."



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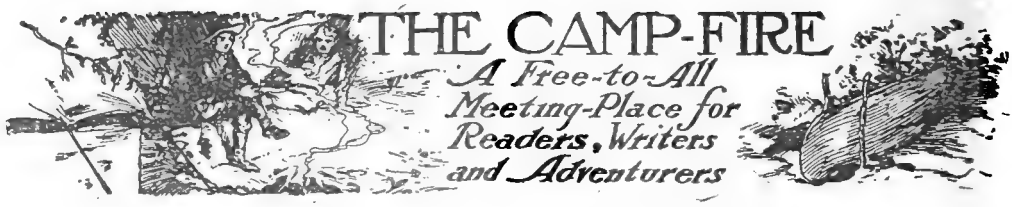

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

A WORD from Charles Victor Fischer concerning his story in this issue:

Newark, New Jersey.

The $17,000 "ten-strike" is no wild figment of my imagination. In 1912, a lad who was attached to one of the battle-ships (I think it was the *Georgia*) made it.

Should the query arise: Could an operator receive a message in his sleep? We had one on the *Ohio* some years ago who could.—C. V. FISCHER.

THIS letter from Frank H. Huston harks back to a Camp-Fire discussion of a year ago. Uncle Frank backs up George Ormond as to buckle-cinches on a stock saddle:

Please shake hands with George Ormond for me, for I never saw but one "buckle cinch" on a stock saddle, and that a couple of years ago on an old busted saddle owned by an Easterner—just where, I can't remember, but I think in northern California.

For Central Park, it might be all right, and on one of the —— bang-tails, but punching, *phwee!* Weaken a latigo with holes cut or even punched in it is beyond reason.

HERE, lookut—any fool knows you can't tighten a cinch enough to last at the first put-on; a half-hour's ride even on level ground will leave it as slack as my morals, and when turning and twisting and scrabbling up hills and over rocks (boulders I think the effete call 'em, but rocks to the "elect") you tighten right frequent.

Why, durn it all, you remember how your skate-straps acted around the buckle-holes and how those of your suitcase or trunk act after a few trips? Then imagine the result on a latigo, or the buckle itself, on a forty-pound saddle on a nine to eleven hundred pound jumping, twisting critter with a hundred and sixty or ninety pound rider atop. Then add the strain of a pelting ten or twelve hundred frantic "cows" on a rawhide string to that and you can see that even a double strap cinch full of holes and a three-eighths piece of cast metal "ain't agoin' tuh hold nohow and noways."

In a flat country and with "dogie" cows it might work, but I hae me doots. Anyhow I near fainted when I saw the one I did see and if one of the old-time riders of the days when cows sported horns six and seven feet in the spread from tip to tip should see such a freak, he'd sure drop dead.

Yet "there are more things," etc. (*vide* Billy Shakes.), and there is no telling what some people *will* do. Ormond's right.—UNCLE FRANK.

THIS letter from Arthur G. Brodeur in connection with his *Pierre Faidit* stories was not intended for publication, but I know he'll not mind my passing it on to you so that you too may get the force

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of the interesting idea behind these tales. The effect of medieval fighting men, like *Pierre*, upon the history of Europe, and therefore of this country, seems to me too interesting and important a point not to be presented definitely outside the stories as well as illustrated by them.

I'm leaving in his letter the part concerning the translation of "L'Atlantide" because it seems to be owing to Miss Mary Tongue, the translator.

The last paragraph refers to the last *Pierre Faidit* story and should have appeared in the issue of December 10. It was my fault that it didn't. I'm sorry.

Boston, Massachusetts.

The one unifying element of the series was the character of *Pierre Faidit*. But at last I've got hold of an idea that I've been trying to work out in the stories for some time, and it will develop very prettily, I think, as the central unifying theme of the stories. That idea is the influence of the professional soldier on the national life of Europe—particularly of England. (In the last of the series Pierre will go to England as the envoy and trusted agent of Henry II.)

HERE is my idea: The years I have put in studying and teaching the history of language have made me look upon the history of the English language as a splendid epic, or better, as a saga, expanding in beauty and power through the centuries of English history. One can't study it without studying the growth of English racial, political, and spiritual thought. All the aspects of a nation's development are bound up together. To understand any one aspect, we must study the elements that go to make that people what it is and has been. We Americans, mixed though our blood is, are English in speech, literature, and the spirit of our democracy. We must understand more of our English heritage if we are to know ourselves.

I've been looking for causes all through my study of the English people and its language. In every epoch I've worked down to some one thing as of special moment, as the particular key to that epoch's history. If that thing hadn't been, then the whole character of English life would have been different throughout the later ages. In the 12th century, the one big, basic cause seems to me to be the use that Henry II. made of the professional soldier.

FROM about 800 to about 1,100, the ablest professional soldiers were carving out lands and titles for themselves, in a long struggle that made France and England big, anarchical battle-fields. With a few splendid exceptions, these men—whose swords made them barons—had no sense of loyalty and were animated by selfish greed; and kings were for the most part puppets whom they set up, or strong men who wasted their lives struggling against the greed of the barons.

The 12th century, in both England and France, saw the end of this anarchy and the beginning of national feeling—the beginning of patriotism. Louis VI. and Louis VII. in France, partly by violence and partly by statesmanship, extended the kingdom from a little triangle around Paris, Sens, and Orléans until it ultimately embraced almost its present extent. The ablest vassal of Louis VII., in military affairs at least, was Alphonse of Toulouse, who had enough vision and devotion to France to give up his independent tenure of his own free will and add his vast holdings to the new nation. In England, after the bloody anarchy of Stephen's reign, Henry II. and Thomas à Becket put down the tyranny of the barons, won the confidence of the people, and through the new Royal Council established the beginning of parliamentary government.

THEY did this by setting up a new and lesser aristocracy as a countercheck to the irresponsible power of the barons. This aristocracy was composed of "knights and gentlemen"—the forerunners of the country squires. The men chosen for the new titles were mostly from the humbler ranks—men naturally opposed to the barons, and in touch with the people. By appointing these men sheriffs and circuit justices, Henry made it possible for the oppressed peasant to have his case tried by sympathetic officials of birth not much higher than his own. By making the majority of his Royal Council of these men, Henry assured the representation of the people's point of view in matters of national policy. As a result, it was only a few years before the whole people of England were united, loyal and possessed of a sense of a common national purpose.

Here is the point: the greater part of this new aristocracy was made up of men who had been professional soldiers, and of relatively low birth. What counted in their selection was not rank or privilege, but their devotion to the crown and their proved ability. They were self-made men, in an age when the self-made man had a chance to prove his worth. Having risen to military fame through their deeds, in the service of the barons or the King himself, they were familiar with the processes of war and government; but having risen from the people, they knew the people's needs. *Pierre Faidit* represents this type, which contributed more than any other to the greatness and unity of medieval England.

I LAY his first adventures in France, because of the color of French life in the 12th century; but also because it was just such French professional soldiers who made the best of Henry's English followers. From France they brought traditions of chivalry and honor, and a civilization higher than England's; in England they quickly became Englishmen, picking up English ways and learning England's needs, and infusing into English life a refinement and a power of organization such as the native English had not developed.

Of course *Pierre Faidit* represents the finer type of professional soldiers, the type to which Thomas à Becket—before he became a priest—also belonged. Not all were like him, but many possessed his loyalty, and some, under masters like Alphonse of Toulouse, learned that devotion and resource and patriotism which, before the end of the series, I hope to show as the source of *Pierre's* usefulness. It is to the professional soldier, like *Pierre* promoted for merit to distinction, that England owes her greatness and her swift national development under the Plantagenets.

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Therefore I have apprenticed *Pierre* first to Alphonse, and later to Henry II. The series will show, I hope, both the debt England owes to the loyalty of this type and her general debt to French civilization. Of course I didn't have all this in mind when I began; but I had much of it, and the rest has been stewing as I went along.

RECENTLY I met Professor Gilbert Chinard, of Johns Hopkins, who was at the University of California until last year. I mentioned to him that bully story of Pierre Bénoit's—"*L'Atlantide*." I said that the English style was so admirable that I was sure the author himself made the translation for *Adventure*; for I couldn't conceive of so splendid a translation being done by any but a stylist who knew English as well as French, and to whom French was native. But Professor Chinard told me that the translation was made by a girl in this country, who had been sharply and unjustly criticized, in reviews of the story, for the quality of her translation. He urged me to tell you my opinion of her work, in order that something might be done to counteract the wrongheaded criticism that had been heaped upon her.

I know something about translation, having put in the best part of four years on such a job myself, and having studied very carefully the technic of translation before I felt ready to get at it. Translation as it is usually done is rotten hack work; but at its best it is a fine art. Sometimes it is much harder than original composition. I regard the English translation of "*L'Atlantide*," as it appeared in *Adventure*, as the best specimen of the translator's art I ever saw.

THE castle of Tarascon, in "Before Midnight," has nothing to do with the famous Tarascon of King René and Tartarin. That is on the Rhone; and the Tarascon of my story is on the Ariège, in the province of Foix. It is a little place, of such slight importance now that guidebooks and works of reference pay little or no attention to it; but in the twelfth century its position made it the natural barbican of Foix and its mistress, Toulouse, against the rapacity of Barcelona. The episode of *Red Hugo* is imaginary; but the quarrel of Alphonse-Jourdain and Raymond-Bérenger over this castle is historical.—ARTHUR G. BRODEUR.

THE Lost Adams Mine. Here are three extremely interesting letters concerning it which have lain in our cache for some time:

Quemado, New Mexico.

As to the information from Amedee La V. Reyburn, Jr., about Adams Mine located in northwest New Mexico being a silver mine instead of gold. It is of course possible as it has been fifty-four years since Adams was here, but all over this Adams country it is supposed to be a gold mine. The man who escaped with Adams was named Davis, and after he and Adams reached California, was never heard of again.

A NUMBER of old-timers here knew Adams and a few personally helped him in his search. It appears that he made three trips hunting his mine, on two of which he got hopelessly off his trail. The last one, however, he felt sure was right. He had been hunting for a certain camping-spot where he and the first party camped the third night. He found this about twelve miles north of where Quemado, New Mexico, now is. Here he was stricken with paralysis, from which he never recovered.

Now the only living white man I know of who was in the party that old Victorio was to lead to this mine is Langford Johnson, of Datil, New Mexico. He knew old Vic quite well.

CAN any of Camp-Fire readers tell me which Apache leader murdered the first Adams party —Geronimo, or Nan-Na?

Also can any tell me where Nan-Na's original stronghold was? In this country it is credited with being a high, naturally fortified mesa about twelve miles from the Acamo Pueblo or about twenty-five miles south of the Santa Fé Railroad.

A man named Captain Shaw of Los Angeles spent five years with Adams hunting for this mine, and when Adams died he spent the remainder of his life hunting it. The last two main landmarks are the Little Door cañon and the Little Z cañon, supposed to be close to the mine. I have found both of these, but who can tell where to go from there?

NOW on an old Apache and Aztec trail leading to this Adams Mine is an enormous ice cave. This cave is in the Mala Tierra or bad-lands and is almost impossible of access unless a person knows the trail. You go from the northwest part of these bad-lands in a northeasterly course until you come to a natural bridge about four miles long. It is possible to lead your horse over this if he is well shod and easily handled. Without any warning of any kind you come to an enormous cave or crater in the bad-lands. Upon entering this you find yourself in an enormous ice cave. You can walk back in it as far as you can stand the terrible cold. How far it runs I do not know, but after going about two hundred yards you become so cold you have to come out of it, in August at that.

Would like to know if any other white men have been to this place, if it has any sign in history as the old Aztec and Apache sign can be traced from Mexico City to this place.—M. M. COLEMAN.

Chloride, Arizona.

Can any old-timer tell us about Adams, and his lost mine?

THERE are but few of the old boys kicking around now who are familiar with that event. It has been an effort of the writer during later years to do what lay in my power to preserve the incidents of these bygone days. I came into Northern Arizona a lad of thirteen years, back forty-five years ago in June, 1874, when the narrative of the real pioneer was either in the making or the near past. And my memory is still acute to these times and happenings.

Yet the mists and hazes that obscure the vision in looking backward near half a century efface many landmarks; again the multiplicity of legend and story differs as to the individual information or romantic style of the narrator.

I HAVE heard this story told in a dozen different ways, yet the main, salient points are similar. One thing in the recapitulation as given by Mr. Coleman that was new to me was the name given

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Adams' companion. "Davis," that was entirely new to me. He always, in all the versions I ever heard, figured simply as the "Dutchman." I doubt if his name was Davis, yet I do not know, nor can I give the year that Adams first showed up hunting for his lost mine, but will approximate it at about 1870, for it was widely known over this land when I arrived in '74. In fact, Ooo Hoo Tex. started from my city here, Chloride, in '74 in a quest for the Adams digging, and in '75 and '76 I met and talked with different people who had also been on the same quest. At sixteen years of age, in the Fall of '76, I and another young man had a try at it ourselves. But in order to avoid a close acquaintance with the White Mountain Apaches we hastily abandoned our endeavor in the headwaters of the Little Colorado. We saw Mr. Indian's tracks before he saw us or our house—the swift and silent get-away.

The man of the day and age had such respect for Mr. White Mountain Apache, that we did not intrude our presence upon him except by mere accident, and upon such occasions we slid only "so quick" as we could make a disappearance. Very vivid is the memory of a time or two when I met up with the gentleman. His instincts were coarse and his manners were very crude.

I never personally met Mr. Adams, but knew many men who had either been with him on his different expeditions or had met and talked with him. I know he was a real character, and will proceed without further explanation to give his story as I got it then.

THE original Adams party consisted of nineteen men. I can not say where they hailed from, or whither bound, but somewhere in the White Mountains in eastern Arizona they found gold, and in very paying quantities. They worked on the community plan, each doing his task, and putting the proceeds in the common purse, which consisted of a box sunk in the ground in a large log cabin hastily constructed as a shelter with a large crude brick fireplace which would be the only means left to locate the house.

A camp of Indians was near them, but the Indians went to much trouble to show their friendship, and disarmed suspicion, it seems, entirely. Also, ye pale-face of ye frozen land wotted not of the treachery of your red brothers.

As provisions were low, it was necessary to send two men out with all the animals for a train load of provisions and supplies. They headed for the nearest known trading-post at the mission of Socorro on the Rio Grande, and this was the last of these men and animals. The Indians got them evidently, going out. There is no trace of them to be got at the Old Mission.

FOR the seventeen men left there was the long wait and in the mean time their rations were reduced to venison or deer-meat straight.

When the train was overdue, each day two men were detailed to ascend a mountain peak where a long view could be had of a long, sloping mesa where the train had disappeared from view to the east to see if it could be glimpsed on its return.

The fatal day it fell to Adams and the Dutchman to watch. Adams took his six-shooter and belt supply of ammunition; the Dutchman left his arms at camp.

Some time in the afternoon they heard rapid firing back at camp, and presently saw a great smoke. Assured that the house was fired and that the worst had happened, they hid until darkness and crept back to investigate. They found several nude bodies of their companions. The Indians had stripped all the clothing from the dead, even their boots and shoes, and had carried off or destroyed every vestige of their outfit.

THE Dutchman's shoes were completely worn out, and the first object in crawling back into camp was to salvage a pair of boots or shoes from the dead for himself. They obtained nothing, and slipped again into the darkness.

They wandered for over a week, and became hopelessly lost. Adams cut off the lower legs of his buckskin breeches and made moccasins for his comrades, and they thus trudged around some time. Adams would get a turkey or a rabbit with his pistol and they would eat. But most of the time it was not eat—when almost finished and exhausted they encountered a troop of soldiers who furnished them with mules to ride. They were picked up in the headwaters of the Gila River, west of the White Mountains.

THESE troopers had three Apache Indian prisoners they had taken and were carrying along. At sight Adams and Dutchie recognized them as of the party who had killed their companions, but discreetly said not a word nor betrayed any recognition.

After Adams had rested and fed and clothed up again, he, they being now in the beaten track, once more determined on action. And it is here the Dutchman goes out of the story forever. It is claimed he returned to Germany.

In the darkness Adams purloined the lieutenant's saddle from camp with the two dragoon Colts revolvers with their stock of caps, balls and powder (as all pistols, even rifles mostly, loaded from the point end in those days) also hung an Army carbine on the saddle, took the lieutenant's horse off the picket-pin, saddled him and tied him conveniently for a hasty getaway.

The soldiers were all sleeping except the guard, who kept up a good fire and stood guard over the three Indians. Adams, feigning cold, came to the fire as if to warm himself, and when the soldier's back was turned he just stepped up to the sleeping Indians and it was *pop, pop, pop* and in a jiffy he killed the three, and jumped out in the darkness. The soldiers fired in his general direction and of course missed him. A faint clatter of hoofs marked the direction in which he fled into the landscape.

THUS Adams became a fugitive from justice for twenty years. He was a very young man then. Uncle Sam wanted to punish him for killing the enemies in a manner not provided for in manual of strategy and tactics, also for stealing Government property. In twenty years his case was "nolle-prossed" in the record and it was then Adams, a grizzled gray man, turned up in Arizona in a life's quest for a lost mine.

After escaping he went to the mines in California, afterward marrying a Spanish woman who had some property, and builded up a ranch and stock which he finally sold for twenty thousand dollars to begin his great search of the line of the Golden Sheen. All this he spent in equipping various expeditions, and various parties staked him anew. It is reported a

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doctor in Chicago put up forty thousand. It took heavy parties in these days to go into the heart of the Apache country, and it cost heavily to maintain them. Adams, as long as he lived, never gave up hope of finding it.

There is much incidental detail not necessary in this brief sketch, but it is safe to say more men have lost their lives in the hopeless quest for the Lost Adams Mine than all other lost mines combined in the wide West. *And it is still lost.*—JOHN L. RIGGS.

Globe, Arizona.

I have long been an interested reader of the Camp-Fire chats and have enjoyed them very much, as well as gained much very valuable information. I am a prospector and miner and have "plied my trade" from Alaska to the tropics and so very naturally when I read anything in my line in the Camp-Fire I "sit up and take notice."

IN THE Camp-Fire of March 18th (1920), I note an article regarding the "Apache" or "Lost Adams Mine" in New Mexico. As it happens, I have always had a weakness for this lost mine business and have spent many a week trying to run down various stories of this kind and also to find the mine if possible. About eighteen years ago I was working in a small mine, sixty miles from Baker City, Oregon, and my partner in the drift was a middle-aged man named Getchel, who first told me the story of the Lost Adams Mine.

According to him, Adams was a member of a party who were heading west by the southern route through Texas and, as all were at that time, looking for gold. Somewhere in the neighborhood of where El Paso now stands they encountered a band of renegade Mexicans who held an Apache Indian as captive. The Indian was either rescued by or in a trade turned over to Adams' party, who offered the Indian his liberty. The latter volunteered to guide the party to a place where there was "pay dirt."

THEY traveled north along the Rio Grande River to the northern part of New Mexico, where the Indian took them to an exceptionally rich deposit of placer gold. The party at once went to work and after several weeks' labor cleaned up what they had and divided the party, some continuing on at the work, while the balance took the clean-up by pack-train to Yuma, Arizona, and were to return with supplies for the coming Winter. The scene of the mine was described as being a small basin and could be entered only through a very narrow gorge through which a loaded pack-animal could not pass and which was overlooked by three peaks, conical in shape and very much alike, and they in turn rested on the edge of a flat desert plain or valley.

After the Yuma party were absent several weeks the men at the mine became anxious for their safety and kept a lookout posted on one of the buttes in hopes of sighting the pack-train coming in. Adams and one companion were on the hill one evening when, hearing shots, they looked back to the camp; and the cabin was in flames and the valley was filled with hostile Indians. With no water or provisions, they were forced to flee and endeavored to keep the general route the pack-train was supposed to be coming over. After wandering several days they were picked up in a delirious condition by a party of United States cavalrymen. Adams' companion was then dying and Adams himself nearly so, but after a period of several months recovered. It was several years, though, before the country quieted down enough to allow him to go back, and during the balance of his life he tried numbers of times to again find the mine and, after spending several "stakes" in the effort, finally died, a disappointed man.

THIS was Getchel's story, and he told me he had tried to follow Adams and thus get an idea of the location, but always lost him. Getchel also said he found a place that nearly answered the description; but a large, drifting sandhill had nearly filled the little valley. He found stumps of cedars cut years before and what he took to be the remains of a sluice-box, but only a few pin-head colors in the way of gold.

Several years after hearing Getchel's story I was prospecting near El Dorado Cañon, Nevada, and picked up an old magazine along the trail which contained an account of the Lost Adams Mine, and it corresponded very closely to what Getchel had told me as I had remembered it, but it went some further by publishing the cavalry officer's statement about finding not only Adams and his companion but also the remains of the pack-train, who were also overcome and killed by the Indians. It seems to me it also spoke of some record in Yuma mentioning the gold brought in by this party.

ADAMS claimed that beneath the cabin at the mine were buried nearly one hundred and fifty pounds of dust. I have heard other versions of this story, but on the whole they tallied very closely with the tale as I first heard it. Mr. Reyburn speaks of Victorio being met and turned back by a large war-party of the Apaches. This hardly looks reasonable, because, as I understand it, Victorio was the high war chief at that time of all the Apaches and as such would hardly be turned back, and again it always has been a very rare occurrence for an Indian to show the location of any mine of value. It is against their religion. A squaw was responsible for the discovery of the one-time famous Harqua Hala Mine. She was in love with a Mexican and took him to the place but refused to show him the exact place where the gold was to be found, but told him to look around. He beat her for refusing to lead him closer, and during the night she deserted him and the following morning he fled in fear of the Indians. Some white men later found the ledge, and thousands were picked up on the surface of the ground as the surface quartz was extremely rich.

I HOPE the foregoing will be of some interest to the readers of the Camp-Fire and in closing will add that the remedy most commonly used through the Southwest and also in the tropics for snake-bite is simply permanganate of potash in the crystal form. The wound is slit open and the crystals put in the open wound and a tourniquet made if the wound is on a limb, as is usually the case.—L. V. CAROTHERS.

A NEW Camp-Fire Station for us in Ceiba, Spanish Honduras, with a Western rancher as Keeper. I'll bet that any Westerner who drops in will get an unusually warm welcome.

It's against the rules to give out the addresses of our writers, but we're always

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glad to forward letters addressed to them in our care.

La Ceiba, Spanish Honduras.

I have often been going to write, but somehow I just didn't do it. Please excuse this paper, but the truth of the matter is that this is the only paper I have at present and if I went after any other I'm afraid I wouldn't have any inspiration left after I made the trip to the store (or perspiration either, for it's darned hot).

HAVE lived in the West all my life and wouldn't even get out of it while in the Army. They kept me on the Mexican border. That's not saying I haven't been out, for I'm out now, and I'm sure a-drifting back *muy pronto*. Arizona is my stamping-ground, and my occupation is cattle.

I sure get lonesome and homesick here for a good bronc to fork. "Hain't" any here. And I'd just about ooze off these postage-stamp things they call saddles here. I've got mine, a fifty-pound, fourteen-inch Sewell Austin, but doggoned if I can find anything big enough to tote it for me. The horses are half between an "Arizona mocking-bird" and a scrub short-horn that's had a bad Winter. That can be made to move sometimes, if persuaded hard enough.

Motion pictures don't give real punchers their just dues. They try to dude them up too much. Cow work is a darned hard job, and I ought to know, for I was born and raised on a cow outfit. My dad has a ranch now that isn't so very small. All cattle, too. The only things he grows on that ranch besides cattle, are his whiskers and a thirst. He can grow the whiskers yet, but—darn the modern times anyway! But to get back on the "Camina otro vez," I want to start a club here in Ceiba. Can you send me the needed things to start with, and a flock of instructions? There are lots of Typical Tropical Tramps here who would welcome it with open arms. And if there are any expenses, just give me 'em and I'll fix it. I will close, hoping *Adventure* has a good green pasture forever and a good many stories of the West in her.—JOS. BUCKLY TAYLOR.

P. S.—If permitted, will you please give me W. C. Tuttle's address? I want to tell him "How!"

J. B. T.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibilty and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club or resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

No. 50—ALABAMA—Birmingham. Percy E. Coleman, 2804 Tennessee Ave.

No. 39—AUSTRALIA—Melbourne. William H. Turner, 52 Emmaline St., Northcote.
No. 76— Melbourne. Chas. M. Nealy, "Oora," Abbott St., Sandringham.

No. 44—CALIFORNIA—Oakland. Lewis F. Wilson, 836 Seventh Ave.
No. 28— Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, care of Gen. Pet. No. 2.
No. 38— Los Angeles. Colonel Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mount Washington.
No. 60— San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
No. 73— Blythe. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
No. 74— Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.

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No. 64—FRANCE—Paris. Walter Denman, 19 rue Auber.

No. 65—GREAT BRITAIN—North Wales. William J. Cooper, "Kia Ora," Plastirion Ave., Prestatyn.

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No. 88—MISSISSIPPI—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Box 244.

No. 51—MISSOURI—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., 'phone Riverside 250.

No. 17—NEW JERSEY—Caldwell. Chas. A. Gerlard, P. O. Box 13.
No. 16— Bayonne. J. D. Gray, 92 West Sixth St.

No. 23—NEW YORK—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.
No. 81— Limerick. W. I. Robertson, Bonnie Brae Farm.
No. 42— Yonkers. A. F. Whegan, 173 Elm St.
No. 34— New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
No. 93— Rochester. Thomas C. Murphy, 62 Swan St.

No. 13—OHIO—Cleveland. Wayne Eberly, 602 National City Bldg.
No. 52— Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, E. Third St.
No. 58— Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
No. 63— Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
No. 75— Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.

No. 57—OKLAHOMA—Haskell. D. E. Jonson.

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No. 24— Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street.
No. 78— Pittsburg. Peter C. Szarmach, 3104 Phelan St.
No. 21— Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.

No. 46—PORTO RICO—San Juan. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 944.

No. 70—SPANISH HONDURAS. Jos. Buckly Taylor, H. S. D. Cl., Monte Cristo, La Ceiba.

No. 8—SOUTH CAROLINA—Allendale. Ed. N. Clark, Editor-owner, *The Tri-County Record* and Allendale *Advance*.

No. 54—TEXAS—Houston. M. B. Couch, Route 2, Box 189.

No. 3—WASHINGTON—Republic. A. E. Beaumont, Box 283.
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No. 61— Burlington. Judge B. N. Alberson, Fairhaven Ave.
No. 83— Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book Store, 1330 First Ave.
No. 7— La Connor. Ed. L. Carson.
No. 71— Charleston. Elmer E. McLean, Box 561.

No. 48—WEST VIRGINIA—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.

No. 41—WISCONSIN—Madison. Frank Weston, Room 9, Tenny Bldg.
No. 5— Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. 2, 150 Biddle St.
No. 72— Kenosha. Leland Birchard, 304 Marion Ave.

WHEN our Camp-Fire Stations were first under discussion perhaps the chief objection raised was that any one who started a Station would be subject to visits from men who would abuse his hospitality in various ways and be objectionable and a nuisance or worse. Stations have been in operation about a year now and *there has not been one single complaint* from any Keeper concerning the men who have visited his Station. Think that over. Could there be any better tribute to the manly, friendly feeling that prevails at our Camp-Fire? There are all kinds among us, criminals as well as officers of the law, hoboes as well as college professors, "toughs" as well as ministers and priests, but when it comes to Camp-Fire it becomes, with all of them, a question of friends, comrades, pals and they play the game accordingly. They've learned they get fair treatment and a friendly hand from the rest of our crowd and they stand ready to give what they get. There are rotters among all classes, despised by their own fellows, but what draws us all together at Camp-Fire is a common interest in the clean, manly outdoor things of life and the rotter, be he criminal, dude or professor, doesn't add himself to a gathering of that kind.

Of course a rotter, who never sat in at Camp-Fire, can hear of our Stations and abuse them, for rotters go everywhere, but the Keeper of a Camp-Fire Station is pretty sure to be the kind of man who isn't likely to take abuse lying down or to be gulled by crooked plays. As time goes on maybe we can take steps to make it particularly unhealthy for any rotters who may butt in on Camp-Fire and its Stations. But the significant thing is that, during the whole first year, there hasn't been a sign or trace of a rotter at any Station. Camp-Fire has reason to feel proud of itself.

THE Stations have come to stay. There is no doubt of that. If the idea hadn't been sound and practical, the first year would have wiped them off the boards. Instead, you have noted their steady growth. During the next year we expect to add various features that will add greatly to the value and interest of the Stations—are at work now, in fact, on these plans. There are going to be Stations all over the world before we're through, and Camp-Fire is going to be mighty proud of its local rallying places.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Mid-Feb., 1920; Mid-March, 1920; Mid-June, 1920; Mid-July, 1920, up to and including Mid-Sept., 1921 issue with the exception of First Feb., 1921 issue. All in good condition. Five dollars, not including postage—Address R. H. BRIGGS, 4058 Park Ave., Chicago, Ill.

WILL SELL: 1919, 1920, 1921 and most of 1918, at five cents each, postpaid.—Address FRED C. WILKINS, 24 Cherry St., Danvers, Mass.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

In their homes or shops some members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to—maintain Stations where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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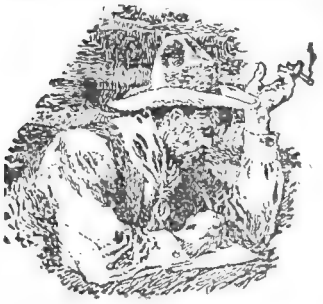
Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelop is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, 1508 Columbia St., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

3. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

5. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn). Natives, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

6. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph.D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

8. New Guinea
DR. ALBERT BUELL LEWIS, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

9. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, 5444 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. History, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

10. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 103 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

11. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

12. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine St., New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

13. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), care *Adventure*. Petrograd and its province, Finland, northern Caucasus, Primorsk district, island of Sakhalien. Travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

14. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, Niger River to Jebba, northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora, tribal histories, witchcraft.

15. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan.

★(*Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached*)

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Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

16. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN P. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

17. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

18. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

19. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
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20. Africa Part 7 Egypt and Barbary States
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Egypt and Sudan, Tunis, Algeria. Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

21. Turkey and Asia Minor
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Travel, history, geography, races, language, customs, trade opportunities.

22. Balkans
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Greece, Albania, Jugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, Roumania. Travel, history, topography, language, customs, trade opportunities.

23. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

24. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

25. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

26. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

27. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Topolobampo, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, business and general conditions.

28. ✠ Canada Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

29. ✠ Canada Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Ottawa Valley and southeastern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

30. ✠ Canada Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay and southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

31. Canada Part 4
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

32. Canada Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, La Connor, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

33. ✠ Canada Part 6
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

34. ✠ Canada Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

35. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipmuent, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

36. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

37. Western U. S. Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas and Oklahoma. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

38. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

39. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

40. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
(Editor to be appointed.) Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

41. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; automobile, motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating; river tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

42. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

43. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and advice; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. Arthur Bent, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

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STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. Binda, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

What Florida is Like

IT'S a kindly land to the man who likes his fishing and hunting:

Question:—"Years ago I read your first story in *Adventure*—and have been reading them ever since. I do not remember what outfit you were with in the P. I., but I do remember that you and Peter B. Kyne were there at the same time. I was there from 1900 to 1904 in the 16th regulars.

I have knocked about the world a bit and, as the rolling stone generally does, have not gathered much moss.

Every year I find it increasingly harder to stand the cold of the north in Winter.

I have been wondering for some time how I could get some accurate information about Florida, and, happening to notice in *Adventure* that you are now living in Orlando, I decided to write you.

I would like to know approximately how much it would cost a determined man to start in the poultry business in Florida; something about the advantages—and disadvantages—of different sections. Markets, etc. I have been informed that the west coast is practically all sand and not tillable.

I would like to locate at some distance from cities. Not close in. Can you give me average prices for land in outlying districts which could be made to produce a living with hard work and not much money?

Despite all I have heard I think I would prefer the west coast, not too far from Tampa—either north or south. Have read a little about Brookville, but am under the impression it is settled more thickly than I would like. Can you give me the average height above sea-level of this section? Is the fishing good?

Is there a regular rainy season? And is it a disagreeable place to live in Summer? I do not mean heat. We can stand all that, I'm sure. Are there any Government lands open to entry and suitable to my purpose? In fact any information of any kind that you can give me will be most thankfully appreciated.

Please do not think that hardships will be any deterrent. In 1916 my wife and I on a vacation spent several weeks on a walking-trip from Gainesville, Ga., to Knoxville, Penn., without a tent or any other equipment except what we easily could carry—and found it the most enjoyable time of our lives. After leaving Copper Hill we kept as closely as possible to the State line to Townsend, Penn., and sometimes for days did not see a single soul. However, I do not wish to take up too much of your time so had better cut this short."—A. L. HOOVER, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—So you "read my first story in *Adventure* and have been reading them ever since." Ten or twelve years ago, I guess. I hope you liked them. Yes, I was in the Philippines; in Company L of the 29th Volunteer Infantry. Came back in 1901. I never saw Peter B. Kyne, though I had a letter from him once. And you're thinking of going to Florida. All right. Let's talk it over together.

It will cost you to start in the poultry business in Florida about what it will cost anywhere else. White Leghorn chickens are a favorite in Florida. The egg market is nearly always good, and much of the time it is excellent. If it were me, I would have the Leghorns for laying, and Rhode Island Reds for broilers.

Advantages and disadvantages of different sections? On the east coast the water is apt to be sulfurous, and when the wind is from landward it is likely to bring mosquitoes. On the west coast the water is apt to be hard; wind and mosquitoes the same. Houses down here are screened with a fine mesh of wire, however, and mosquitoes don't bother much inside houses. It is at night and in low places chiefly that mosquitoes are really bothersome.

Central Florida is my choice of sections. The water is soft, the mosquitoes are not bad, the climate is better. And Orlando, though it is a high-priced town, is the best town in central Florida—as well as the biggest. It has some 10,000 people, and makes a good market for such things as eggs and broilers. There is never a lack of markets.

The west coast is practically all sand. Most of Florida is practically all sand. A lot of it is desert covered with scrub. The fertile spots lie here and there over the State. Fertilizer is used a great deal, too.

Prices of land not close to cities? Far out like that, you can get it very cheap. The price, of course, depends on what and where the land is. Florida land goes at from almost nothing per acre up to almost any figure you can imagine.

Lakeland also is a good town, and it isn't too far from Tampa—about forty miles, with fine roads connecting. I don't believe you would especially like it either north or south of Tampa.

There are few points in Florida more than 200 feet above sea-level. Fishing is good nearly anywhere in Florida, and so is hunting. I have never been able to pick out any regular rainy season. The Summers are long, but they are very nice.

Don't believe there are any free lands left that you would like. They have one or more serious drawbacks. Write R. H. Davis, Land Office, Gainesville, for further information as to free lands.

Well, I don't know anything else to tell you that

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would help—except do a lot of investigating before you buy land in Florida. If you get down here, I will be glad to see you.

Matrimony at Nome

IT'S unavoidable for the right kind of girl, according to Mr. Solomons:

Question:—"I presume I am a victim of Alaska fever and would appreciate any information you could give me. How many white women are in Nome? What kind of recreation is available? Is there a hospital there?"—Miss A. Gault, Germantown, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—Nome has been on the decline for ten years, but it remains a steady little town. I suppose there are nearly half as many women as men there in Winter, and a third as many in Summer. The entire population will average Winter and Summer two or three thousand, there and in the vicinity. There is a small hospital. Nome is well built, having housed ten thousand people in its time (thirty thousand once, mostly in tents).

There's plenty of recreation, far more in fact than on the "outside." The usual sports with Winter sports in the cold time.

A woman is well treated, and if she's a useful sort and nice she can't avoid matrimony with a six-gun. It's a deadly respectable burg now. The saloon and the dance-hall are relics of its pleistocene age.

There are newer towns than Nome, less settled, where the chances for adventure and of winnings of various sorts are better. It's all according to what you are looking for. Nursing is always well paid, though Alaska is a pretty healthy place.

I can recommend Alaska to a woman who is of the nurse sort. She's likely to do well. She can always turn her hand to some quasi-domestic work—a roadhouse, a lunchroom, a housekeeper job, etc., between times. Or she can run a little hospital. Write again for particulars if you remain interested.

Whiffletree Marks 25 Feet Above Ground

IT HAPPENED in Idaho:

Question:—"Having read quite a number of 'Ask Adventure' questions I have got in the notion myself; and, seeing that nobody has got Wyoming, I am asking you.

1. Where would I be able to get a book containing the old Chisholm trail songs, and about what would it cost?
2. Is sheep-raising the general product of Idaho?
3. How is it for dry farming or homesteading?
4. Are the seasons long or short?
5. What are the different kinds of soil?
6. Is there much mining done? If so, what kind?
7. What kind of game is found?
8. Is the climate anything like Wyoming?

If what I ask is out of your district let me know. Also who has the district."—Red, Douglas, Wyo.

"P. S. If any or all of above questions are printed use above name."

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Sheep-raising used to be the principal industry in Idaho, and I suppose it is yet. I have no figures regarding it of late years, but know it was so a number of years ago.

Don't know where you would get the book of songs of Chisholm trail.

Poor chance of getting a homestead worth a filing-fee, according to Idaho men and the Department of the Interior.

The seasons run short Summers, long Winters.

Can not tell you about soils. They vary, as in all States.

Quite a good bit of mining in some parts. The Cœur d'Alene part has been famous for gold these many years. I have received letters from the superintendent of a mine away back in the mountains in Idaho County.

The game is much like that of the rough country in Wyoming.

As to climate—the Snake River country duplicates the climate of Laramie Plains. The climate from Pocatello to Monida is about the same all the way.

Write to Larry Phelan, Burgdorff, Idaho, for further information about the State.

Idaho is not assigned to anybody yet. Neither are Montana and Wyoming and Colorado.

To give you a little more of an idea about climate—Payette has its horses on snow-shoes in Winter. On some roads there are whiffletree marks twenty-five feet above ground on trees. In some parts I have known men to shovel from five to ten feet of snow off a road in July, at 6,000 feet elevation.

Not exactly overheated; eh, Red?

Send questions direct to expert in charge —NOT to the magazine.

Combining Vanilla with Coconut Culture

THE vanilla-vines keep the astute planter solvent till the coconut-trees come into bearing:

Question:—"I want to know what the opportunities are in French Oceania, and something about the climate of the various islands. Something about trading, coconut and vanilla culture—how much capital I must have, etc.; how to get there; what cost of transportation is.

I have worked so hard that I am sick of a cooped-up life and want to make a radical change.

Is the information you have up to date?"—C. C. Craig, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Charles Brown, Jr.:—French Oceania offers but few opportunities to the man from "above the line." In fact there are only two—coconut and vanilla culture. These are very remunerative for the time and money expended.

If one knows where and how to get it, as well as a clear title with which to protect himself against all manner of strange claims, he can buy coconut and vanilla land. In many instances planted plantations have been leased out on the half-share basis, the leaseholder working the place for one-half the crops.

Again, vanilla might be set out on an unplanted place. The vines will come into bearing in the third year, with Papeete, Tahiti, as a market to dispose of the green or cured beans.

In the mean time coconut-trees will have been

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planted. These will come into bearing in their seventh or eighth year, after which they will continue producing until they are seventy-five or a hundred years old.

One hundred trees will give a ton of copra a year. Copra is the dried meat of coconuts, and is very much in demand, especially in America.

One should investigate titles very carefully before doing any land-buying in French Oceania. If a young man with $1,000 American can succeed in leasing himself a piece of ground in Tahiti or on any of the other adjacent islands, he should experience no difficulties in holding his own after that. What with native fruits and vegetables, as well as a lagoon of choice sea-foods and valleys teeming with wild chickens, hogs and cattle, he can live as low as $20 American a month.

French Oceania is ideally tropical, with two seasons only, Spring and Summer. The temperature varies from 70 to 86 degrees.

You would find no opportunities in the trading line, for all of the trading-houses are organized on modern methods, with branch trading-stations, etc. Nor would you be apt to enter their employment, as the trading-houses work for the most part half-castes and Frenchmen. All trading is done in French and Tahitian.

Write Hind, Rolph & Co., General Agents, 230 California Street, San Francisco, for sailing dates and rates to Tahiti, Society Islands. The passage from San Francisco to Tahiti, the capital of French Oceania, is at this writing $100 second class.

Read the following books on French Oceania:

"Tahiti Days," by Hector MacQuarrie (George H. Doran Co., New York), "In the Tracks of the Trades," by Lewis R. Freeman (Dodd, Mead & Co., New York), "Mystic Isles of the South Seas," by Frederick O'Brien (Century Co., New York), "Southeastern Pacific Lands," by Fletcher Christian. Also read South Sea number of *Asia* Magazine, April, 1921. "Faerie Islands of the Seas," by Norman Hall and Charles Nordorff. (This series of articles, running in *Harper's Magazine*, started in latter part of 1920.) "White Shadows in the South Seas," by Frederick O'Brien.

My information is up to date. I manage to keep it so because I have been corresponding with many Tahiti people since I left there in November of 1920.

Fresh-Water Pearls

BUTTON-SHELLING might be called a sure thing with a gambling attachment, because a man is certain of making wages on the shells and at any time may run into a gem worth a lot of money:

Question:—"1. Is a matured pearl found loose in the shell or attached to some part of the clam?

2. In a rough estimate, in what ratio are pearls found in fresh-water clams?

3. How do fresh and salt water pearls compare in value? What price are fresh-water pearls bringing in the present market? Does the market fluctuate to any great extent?

4. Which is the most valuable, the white or pink pearl? Are any other colors found in fresh-water pearls?

5. Do fresh-water pearls run as large in size as a 00 buckshot?

In sending these questions to *Adventure* I would appreciate you not using my name."—— ——. Worcester, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Pearls are found detached from the shell, and sometimes overgrown in the shell of fresh-water mussels.

Some shell-beds run a higher proportion of pearls and baroques—*i. e.*, "slugs" or rough pearl chunks—than other beds. Usually a rough, gnarly shell contains a pearl or slug—a cripple shell. An ounce of two of seed, slug and baroque pieces are found to the ton of shells; a pearl of price—from a few dollars to hundreds or thousands of dollars—to several tons. But here the water and conditions vary. In a Texas stream a cow-camp cook shucked out enough to buy a ranch one afternoon. Some button-shellers have never found a good pearl.

Standard pearls are the salt-water ones—Arabians, etc. Green fresh-water pearls are four times as valuable, size for size, as white or pink.

White or pink pearls would sell by their luster; matched pinks might bring far more than single ones. It all depends.

Fresh-water pearls have been found much larger than the 00 buckshot—two to sixty grains, even ninety grains. You will find in the slip with this some other data on the subject. The money is in the shells, the luck in the pearls, the fishers say.

Gas Pistol

THE footpad's friend:

Question:—"A few years ago I noticed a pistol advertised in a London magazine that discharged a gas pellet.

Is there a gas pistol made in this country or abroad? Do you know the address of the maker?"—H. I. GOODSTEIN, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—A pistol discharging a gassing or stupefying projectile was made abroad before the war by some German firm, if I recall correctly. It was called the "Dedless" pistol, and seems to have been such a favorite with footpads, etc., that the police there put it under a heavy ban.

I am not aware that any such arm was ever made or sold here, although some might have been brought over as relics, or possibly smuggled in.

From what I have read of the affair, it shot a charge of chemicals that combined to form a stupefying gas, and was operated as an ordinary single-shot, using a small charge of powder to project the gas.

You might be able to learn more about this by addressing a letter to the editor, *Arms and Explosives*, London, Eng.

Galloping through a Thorn Forest

SOME horsemanship, I'll say:

Question:—"I would like to get some information on the people of South America, industries and the customs and language of the people as I am contemplating going there as soon as I am discharged from the Army, which is in a short time. I have always been a range-rider and would like a little information

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on cow-punching in South America which I have heard so much about.

The reason I wanted information as to the language of the people is, would a fellow have to know it to succeed in South America?"—EARL BOATMAN, Ft. Bliss, Texas.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—I have read your letter with interest. Please find out what Dr. Goldsmith has to say about ranching in his portion of South America. I was among the cowboys of southern Brazil for a while and found them a fine lot of half-breed Indians who would mount anything on four legs and ride it. I was given a wild buckskin pony (*bayo loco*) who was a hard little animal to tame, but I stayed on him and made a good hoss out of him.

They ride a peculiar saddle made of two round bolsters fastened together and which straddles a man out more than he is accustomed to but which is easy on a horse's back. I managed to get hold of a stock saddle after a while from an old American sawmill superintendent.

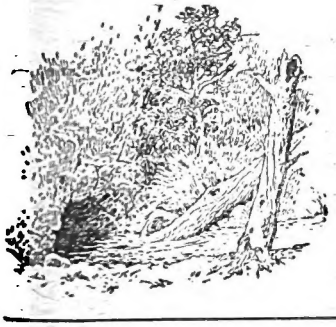
The Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Co., 120 Liberty St., New York City, have some ranches in Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay, and now and then need a foreman. The language is Portuguese. They also have a very large sawmill at Tres Barros, Parana, Brazil, where a number of Americans are working.

In northern Brazil the native riding is impossible for a white man and is one of the wonders of horsemanship, absolutely unbelievable to a man who has not seen it. The forest is composed of thorny trees and underbrush. Man and horse are dressed in leather, and the native will ride at top tilt through this forest, grasp a steer by the tail and throw him with a quick yank. This is a game a man has to be born into, for I never have seen a white rider tackle it.

The southern Brazil rider, however, uses a rawhide rope, and with the exception of having his rope fastened to the hind end of his saddle and training his horse to turn tail to the animal when roped, goes about it in a similar manner to what we do. They raise some hardy, rough broncs in Parana and Santa Catarina States.

The game has gotten more tame than it once was, however. Formerly the cowmen were wild, killed a steer for breakfast and roasted a piece of meat in the hide, slept where night overtook them on their saddle blanket, and were a wild, lawless bunch. Now they are feeling the effects of civilization. Yet in out-of-the-way places like the ones I was in (1,100 from the nearest railroad) they are not overtame yet.

Southern Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentine are the best chances for you, and they are in Dr. Goldsmith's country. Some horses are raised in Chile, Bolivia, and Peru, and some cattle also. Venezuela and Colombia also raise a bunch of cattle; but for a white man I consider the countries I have mentioned to be the best.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

BOOTS, JOHN T. Member of Excelsior Lodge No. 7, Baltimore, K. of P. Last seen in San Francisco in 1905. Supposed to have gone to the Philippine Islands as a machinist for the Government. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address HARRY J. STEVENS, 3601 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, Cal.

HENDERSON, A. F. Write to your old pal at once. Important—BERT, Care of General Delivery, Des Moines, Iowa.

MONK, FRED. May go by name of Alfred Monroe. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated—Address W. C. MONK, 1609 Gano St., Dallas, Texas.

O'CONNOR, DANIEL. Last heard of in Chicago, Ill. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. N. PANES, Habana, Cuba.

REHMANN, MATHIAS. Born in Keischbronn, Baden, South Germany about 1835 or 1840. Was a goldsmith living until about 1910 in Newark, N. Y. His children must be about fifty or sixty years old. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address AUG. F. REHMANN, Hamburg 31, Scharefelderstr; I Germany.

OLIE, PASQUALE. Lived on or near Crosby St., New York City. Put two children in Montrose Ave. Orphan Home in Brooklyn. Are anxious to know his whereabouts as he is the only one who knows something of our parents. We only know their address, which is 31 Crosby St., New York City. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. BIRRITELLA, 516 3rd St., Union Hill, N. J.

WOULD like to hear from shipmates of the S. S. *Carlton* and *Farragut*.—Address P. RICE, U. S. Marine Hospital No. 5, Chicago, Ill.

WHITE, CHARLES. Sign-painter. Would like to hear from you.—Address JOHN BOCHEK, 3015 N. Robey St., Chicago, Ill.

EDWARDS, THOMAS, HERBERT, LAURA and MARGARET. Cousins. Laura and Margaret were in Smith's Home, Berkeley, Cal. Thomas is somewhere in New York. Age about nineteen or twenty years. It is twelve or thirteen years since we have seen them. Mother, Cora Edwards died when they were children, father, Ross Edwards is still living, but can find no trace of him. Grandmother's name is Sadie Erickson. Any information as to their whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address. MRS. LESTER R. THORPE, 130 E. Noble St., Stockton, Cal.

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HINES, JACK. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write, as his mother is anxious to hear from him.—Address J. C. MILLER, 930 Hampshire St., San Francisco, Cal.

CLAPP, MRS. NELLIE. Nineteen years of age, brown eyes and light hair. Has a daughter Hazel about five years old. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Sister, MRS. MARIE BURTON, 149 West G Street, Casper, Wyo.

BROWN, FRED A. and MARY. In the early '90's Isabel and Willie Brown were placed in the Coldwater, Mich., State Home by Fred and Mary Brown. Any one knowing their whereabouts please write.—Address ISABEL J. BROWN, care of *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WILLIAMS, GEORGE C. Would like to hear from you, if you haven't forgotten an old friend.—Address R. C. WRIGHT, 119 N. Derbigny St., New Orleans, La.

HAERTEL, ART. Would like to hear from you. Worked with you at Hotel Del Monte, Monterey, Cal., and left Los Angeles in October, 1920, with show.—Address PERRY SILVEY, 1520 Mississippi Ave., Portland, Oregon.

APPEL, MILTON or MOE. Height about five feet ten inches, age nineteen, well-built, fair complexion, eyes defective, and has scar on pupil of right eye. Left home August, 1920, to attend fairs and carnivals. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Mother, MRS. FANNIE APPEL, 1381 Crotona Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

KUTSCHINSKI, GUSTAVE ADOLPH. Left home about six years ago, and have not heard from him since. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his father.—Address G. M. KUTSCHINSKI, 265 Central Ave., West Hoboken, N. J.

DURAL, MRS. A. (*née* Florentine Bans). Her sister Rose Bergin is anxious to know her whereabouts. Last heard of at Market Street, Philadelphia, Pa. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. M. B. GALBRAITH, Almonte, Lanark Co., Ont. Canada.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

ATKINS, E. E. S. JR.; Bayless, Dorothy; Banks, Jimmie; Breath, Hastlar Gal; Bennett, Thomas T.; Brady, Patrick; Bierly, R. C.; Crafts, H. A.; Chisholm, Bryon; Cardie, Sinn; Caney, Jack; Cuttriss, C. A.; Cortelli, Fatima; Currie, Mildred; Edwards, Henry A.; Emerson, F. S.; Gormley, W.; Gilfillan, Ruth; Gaylord, Alfred; Happy, H.; Hilles, Lieut. Wm.; Hungerford, G. E.; Huntington, C. H.; Holston, S. C.; King, J. D.; Kelly, D.; Kimsey, R. W.; Lynch, W.; Livingston, J. K.; Le Glaire, Peter; Marilee, Nelson; Matter, James K.; Mith, B. Radke; Moran, Edward J.; Moses, James; MacIllrath, W. R.; Murphy, Elsbeth; Madison, Artell; Noble, George; O'Farrel, Patrick; Pierce, Samuel S.; Perry, James; Paterson, Robert G.; Paradis, A. B.; Patten, Lewis E.; Polowe, David; Rhodes, Carrie L.: Roe, Charles; Robinson, Jack P.; Robertson, Mrs. Chester; Rice, Alex.; Stillions, George; Schmidt, Alex R.; Sprague, T. R.; Trekell, Mrs. Cynthia; Warner, J. E.; Weston, Edward; Wittell, Chester; Wilman, Cynthia.

THE following have been inquired for in either the December 20th or December 30th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

ANDERSON, OSCAR; Bell, Tom; Bluewell, James G.; Boniface, W. J.; Bracken, Alva L.; Bronson, D. D; Brune, Frank; Chamberos, Onesime; Clark, W. E.; Craft, Mrs. Harriett; Croad, James; Davis, Mrs. Nora Brazille; Duva, Sven; Fitzpatrick, John F.; Fredricksen, Frank R.; Goldie, Joe or John; Harper, Walter A.; Hogue, Clyde; Howard, Jack S.; Jones, A.; Landers, Morris; Lee, John; Marlin, Michel Jefferson; Mathias, F.; McCune, Thomas; Moffet, Chauncey, Morris, Walter; Nelson, Milton; Niman, Samuel Olmstead, Lela Jean; Puthree, Leopold; Ravens, Arthur; Shultz, Mrs. Frank; Smith, Gordon; Sprout, Robert R.; Stuart, Arthur P.; Teeter, John Pedro; Thayer, Otis Elmer.

MISCELLANEOUS—Armed Guard crew on S. S. *Sobral* 1918; Bennetts; Bob; Former members of Batt. B. 149th F. A. Rainbow Div.; O. W. R.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JANUARY 20TH ISSUE

The next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

TIDES OF HATE A Complete Novel — *Captain Dingle*
Round the Horn with *Captain Ed Davies* and his crew of mutinous pirates.

POWDER LAW A Complete Novelette — *W. C. Tuttle*
Meaning is given to the Law in Montana Territory.

SNAPPY'S PROMOTION — *Lloyd Kohler*
But first he goes down deep.

PARTNERS — *Boyd Fleming*
A Westerner and his horse make a committee of two.

IN KAFFIR KRAALS An Off-the-Trail Article* — *Santie Sabalala*
VI—Savagery overwhelms *Upina*
Tragedy in a Zulu's domestic life.
*(*See first contents page.*)*

THE BOSUN OF THE *GOLDENHORN'S* YARN — *Bill Adams*
Men, and the sea.

JUICE HOG TWENTY-SEVEN — *Kenneth Gilbert*
A Rocky Mountain blizzard, and one way through.

EMPEROR OF THE DRAGONS — *F. St. Mars*
Fierceness needs no fur nor feathers.

MEN OF THE NIGHT A Four-Part Story Part II — *Gordon Young*
Crime acts the fop on Fifth Avenue.

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"We've got to hold Holloway!"

"HE came in to see me this morning and said the National people had offered him $5,000 a year. We've got to meet that offer! We've got to hold Holloway.

"He's got just the training and the knowledge we need. We can't *afford* to lose him. He's the most valuable man in his department.

"It's wonderful what that fellow has done. Out of a $20 a week man, he's made himself a $60 man and it's taken only a year.

"Since the time I had word from the International Correspondence Schools that Holloway was studying in his spare time, he's gone forward by strides. I wish some of the other men would do the same thing. We need more men like Holloway."

EMPLOYERS everywhere are looking for men like Holloway—men who want to get ahead—who are willing to devote a part of their spare time to training for advancement.

How about you? How much longer are you going to wait before taking the step that is bound to bring you a better job and more money?

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- ☐ Electric Lighting & Railways
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Toolmaker
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN or ENG'R
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING & HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ CHEMIST
- ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ BUSINESS MANAGEM'T
- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ ADVERTISING
- ☐ Show Card & Sign Ptg.
- ☐ Railroad Positions
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- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ Business Correspondent
- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer & Typist
- ☐ Certified Public Accountant
- ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
- ☐ Railway Accountant
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ GOOD ENGLISH
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ CIVIL SERVICE
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
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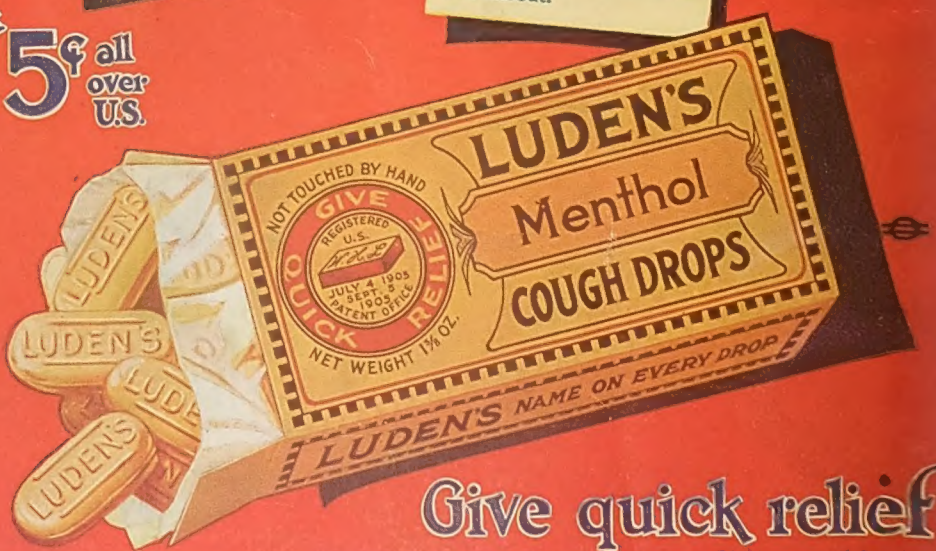

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